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A

TREATISE

ON THE

PASSIONS AND AFFECTIONS

OF THE

MIND,

Philosophical, Ethical, and Theological.

IN A SERIES OF

DISQUISITIONS,

IN WHICH ARE TRACED,

THE MORAL HISTORY OF MAN,

IN HIS

PURSUITS, POWERS, AND MOTIVES OF ACTION,

AND

THE MEANS OF OBTAINING

Permanent Well-Being and Happiness.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

By T. COGAN, M. D.

LONDON:

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AND J. BINNS, AT BATH;
By G. Sidney, Northumberland-street, Strand.

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A

THEOLOGICAL DISQUISITION,

ON THE

CHARACTERISTIC EXCELLENCIES

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

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THEOLOGICAL DISQUISITION,

ON THE

CHARACTERISTIC EXCELLENCIES

OF

CHRISTIANITY:

OR, AN

ENQUIRY

INTO

THE SUPERIOR ASSISTANCE IT AFFORDS,

AND

MOTIVES IT CONTAINS,

FOR THE

PRACTICE OF VIRTUE,

Cultivation of the Best Affections of the Heart, and preparing the Moral Offspring of God for

PERMANENT FELICITY.

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PREFACE.

In the preceding volumes of this Work, we thought it necessary to state our object, our motives, our difficulties, apologies, and encouragements. Upon these subjects we shall not again detain our readers. But, as a preface to the present Disquisition, we beg leave to adopt the words of the venerable Mr. Locke, prefixed to his *Treatise on the Reasonableness of Christianity*; since they fully express the state of the Author's mind during his researches into scriptural truths.

"The little satisfaction and consistency "that is to be found, in most of the systems "of divinity I have met with, made me be-"take myself to the sole reading of the

10260

" Scriptures (to which they all appeal) for
" the understanding the Christian Religion.
" What from thence, by an attentive and
" unbiassed search, I have received, reader,
" I here deliver to thee. If by this, my
" labour, thou receivest any light, or con-
" firmation in the truth, join with me in
" thanks to the Father of lights, for his con-
" descension to our understandings. If,
" upon a fair and unprejudiced examination,
" thou findest I have mistaken the sense and
" tenor of the Gospel, I beseech thee, as a
" true Christian, in the spirit of the Gospel
" (which is that of charity) and in the
" words of sobriety, set me right in the
" doctrine of Salvation."

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INTRODUCTION.

It was asserted, in a preceding Disquisition, that the Jewish and Christian Dispensations alone, contain those principles which are most correspondent with our best conceptions of the Divine Being, in his relative character, and in his conduct towards rational and moral agents; and that his wisdom determined to form a deposit of religious and moral principles, by the progressive influence of which, the human race may be conducted from ignorance to knowledge, and from a state of moral depravity to the love of religion, and the practice of virtue; and thus become participants of the blessings in reserve for the Righteous. In that Disquisition we attempted to investigate the manner in which these purposes were accomplished; and the extensive benefits produced in former ages. We shall now proceed to evince, that the grand design of Christianity is to complete the plan of infinite benevolence, by the uni-

versal diffusion of the purest principles of religion and virtue;—by proposing the most encouraging motives to the practice of their various duties;—and by ensuring permanent happiness to those who shall be rendered capable of enjoying it.

We have hitherto been able, in our former Disquisitions, to confine our attention to principles received by moralists and theologians, leaving *them* to apply these principles to their own speculative opinions; but we enter upon the subject before us under the conviction, that a strict neutrality cannot always be maintained. It is our professed design to inquire into those doctrines which are *essential to Christianity; which constitute its characteristic excellencies, and which give it great pre-eminence over the Jewish Dispensation itself.* But so many opinions have been proposed to us, under the character of *Essentials*; and some of these are so contrary to each other, that, were we to repose a confidence in human authority, no one could extricate his mind from embarrassments.

The high importance of religion is itself a copious source of contrarieties. This inspires a perpetual anxiety lest we should lapse into dangerous errors. Such anxieties, improperly indulged, and ill directed, plunge us into errors

innumerable. Indiscriminating minds have supposed that every thing which has a relation to Religion, is of equal moment; and this supposition, in conjunction with the earnestness with which a speculative disposition is accustomed to enforce its peculiar tenets, has introduced the utmost confusion into theological subjects. The crude and vague conceptions of men have been mistaken for important realities: Subordinates have taken place of principals, until points of mere speculation have gained complete ascendancy over the most interesting truths: Forms and ceremonies of human invention have frequently been placed upon a level with moral duties; and, in some cases, have been permitted to supersede the practice of them.

But to every subject worthy of human investigation, various degrees of importance must necessarily be attached. Its essential properties, or whatever is necessary to its being what it is, must be known, or the subject will remain unknown. The *utility* of the subject is the next object demanding examination; or the application to be made of it in the production of some kind, or degree of Good: without we have this object in view, our pursuits are but frivolous occupations and amusements. Certain

collateral circumstances, and legitimate inferences, may also possess various degrees of importance, though of an inferior nature. *Conjectural* dogmata are not unfrequently added, which, as they have a dubious aspect, cannot promise equal validity in their application; whatever power they may possess over the minds of the proposers. Such gradations exist, resembling the circumferal ringlets in agitated waters, which become weaker and weaker the farther they are remote from the central point.

In the religion of Jesus, the above gradations are strongly marked. To know the immediate object of this Revelation, must be of infinite moment. An accurate knowledge of many circumstances concerning the peculiar methods of its accomplishment, or the extent of its efficacy, cannot be of equal importance; although it may be very desirable; for we may rest assured, that new manifestations of the wisdom and beneficence of the Deity, will accompany every discovery.

The object of all human plans and projects is the production or communication of some Good. The more disinterested, and the greater the benefit to be conferred upon others, the more conspicuously will the character of Benevolence appear. The manifestations of Wisdom

will be correspondent to the obvious adaptation of the means to the end proposed. According to the extent of the benefits to be diffused, shall we proportionate our estimation both of Beneficence and Wisdom; and the more will the character of the Projector be exalted in our conceptions.

The Christian religion is proposed to us as a revelation from heaven. Its professed object is to bless mankind. It is announced to us as the final dispensation; and it must be complete in all its parts, and for all its purposes.

As the Christian religion is, in the estimation of all its professors, the last, or final revelation from God, and a completion of the divine plan for the Good of mankind; and for which that communicated to the Jews was preparatory, we are authorized to expect something great—stupendously great. We may expect that this Dispensation will be enstamped with characteristic marks of peculiar excellence, in its object, mode of establishment, and extent of beneficial effects.

Our design, in the present Disquisition, is to examine it under these three distinct characters. We shall therefore inquire,

I. What are the peculiar blessings presented to us by Christianity.

II. In what manner, or through what medium, are these blessings conveyed.

III. How great will be their extent.

Under the first head, the principles we shall advance will meet with the concurrence of all christians. If by a Revelation we are to understand truths *made known* to us, they must be *intelligible* to all. Whatever is *obscure*, cannot be *clearly* revealed; and if there be any points concerning which men of upright dispositions and sound understandings, entertain different opinions, they may contain *latent truths*, and they will demand serious investigation, but they cannot be of *primary importance*. Concerning these the most inquisitive may err; and it is also possible, that the most superficial may be the most confident.

Under the two last articles in our division, some of the sentiments of the writer, will not correspond with those adopted by many of the pious and learned. But should the truth of his principles not be rendered sufficiently evident, they will be rejected with reluctance; and those who reject, will lament that their own views of this last Dispensation are neither so honourable to God, nor consoling to man.

In the prosecution of our inquiries, we have endeavoured to adhere to the following rules, to direct us in more dubious cases; and we propose them to the inquisitive reader, as the touchstone by which to try the tenets proposed by the author, and also his own.

I. A belief in the infinite Goodness of God, is most consistent with the truest principles of reason. Goodness is an excellence which constitutes the excellence of knowledge, wisdom, and power. It is the most worthy source of all divine operations. It has been proclaimed by the Deity, and displayed in the Revelation of himself to the Jews. Upon the attribute of infinite Benevolence is founded the injunction of our divine Master, "Thou shalt LOVE the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." For we love that alone which we understand to be excellent in itself, and productive of Good; and supreme love pre-supposes supreme excellence in the object. Those sentiments, therefore, which we profess to derive from the New Dispensation, and are most consonant with the infinite benignity of God, must in themselves be the most eligible; and wherever scripture phraseology, which every one admits to be greatly diversified, seems to be at

variance with itself, those solutions of difficult passages in sacred Writ, which best correspond with the most exalted ideas of the divine benignity, are to be preferred.

II. It is universally admitted, that the different writers in the New Testament have adopted different modes of expression; and as many expressions must vary in their import, according to the connection in which they are placed, and the manner in which they are introduced, wherever there is a direct opposition of phraseology, seeming to advance principles or doctrines contrary to each other, the best method of judging of such equivocal passages, is not by the sound of words, but by the general tenour of the principles expressed by the same, or other writers, in more explicit terms. Such expressions are not to be considered as detached aphorisms, containing first principles, but as strong and impressive statements, which have a reference to principles preciously advanced.

III. Expressions obviously *metaphorical*, cannot be the basis of an hypothesis. The object of a metaphor is to explain, illustrate, or enforce; but not to establish first principles. It elucidates subjects not completely obvious, either by the force of analogy, or by adducing examples from things more clearly understood. It will

give different colourings to a sentiment, derived from the subjects to which it alludes, and thus render it more lively, more pathetic, more degrading, more noble, more alarming, according to the impression which it is desirable to make upon the mind. But it always supposes, either that a previous attempt has been made to convince the judgment, or that some fact is known which we desire to render influential.

IV. When the sentiments of theologians oppose each other, and the language of scripture is adduced in support of their respective dogmata, the discriminating powers with which we are endowed teach us, that those opinions which are most consonant with reason should be preferred. Nothing irrational in itself can proceed from a wise being; and whatever appears to be irrational should be immediately suspected. All our intellectual faculties should be in exercise; but the decisions of the judgment should be slow and cautious. The wisest of beings permits us to hesitate in things obscure, that we may have time to balance between the possible and impossible, probable and improbable, credible or incredible. Our discriminating powers will finally discover some standard to which we can apply; and which will solve the difficulty. When, for example, our Saviour

says, "Think not that I am come to send *peace* on earth, I am not come to send peace, but a *sword;*" no Christian supposes that the grand object of his mission was to disseminate discord, foment animosities, and provoke bloodshed; notwithstanding the peremptory form of the assertion: for the reason of every christian assures him, that this language of their divine Master opposes the whole tenour of his own conduct; opposes the injunctions he lays down to promote peace and concord; and is destructive of that happiness promised to the lovers of virtue and goodness. The christian is obliged, therefore, to solve these expressions in a manner congenial with the spirit of genuine Christianity; and to consider them, both as prophesies and warnings, given to his disciples, that the ignorance and evil passions of men, their prejudices, their pride, and arrogance of knowledge, shall render the gospel of peace itself the source of contentions, and of temporary disorders in the world, to which they themselves shall fall a sacrifice. In this instance we clearly see, that common sense directs a phraseology which, at first view, alarms and confounds, into its proper and instructive channel. Various other difficulties might be solved in a similar manner, were the dictates of common sense equally revered.

PART I.

ON THE PECULIAR BLESSINGS COMMUNICATED TO MANKIND BY CHRISTIANITY.

The Jewish Dispensation was introductory to that of Christianity. According to the expression of Saint Paul, "it was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; and in this character it has instructed us in many important doctrines, upon which Christianity is founded, and which it illustrates and enforces upon superior principles, and by superior motives. To the favoured nation was fully revealed a knowledge of the one God; who is the great Creator and Governor of all things, possessing every natural and moral perfection. Hence it is that our Saviour and his Apostles profess not to *reveal* these truths to the world, as truths utterly *unknown*; but they *refer* to them as already established. The command to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, is an implication that we already *know* that he is good. A similar reference is made to the *wisdom*, *knowledge*, and *power* of

God. "Oh the depth of the riches both of the Knowledge and Wisdom of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways are past finding out!" "That we may know," says the same Apostle, "what is the exceeding greatness of his *power* towards us that believe, according to the working of his mighty power." The *spirituality* of the divine nature, is mentioned but once, in the writings of the New Testament, and it is solely to draw the inference, that, as God is a Spirit, he is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. The Jewish Religion, fully instructed that nation in their duty towards both God and man, and strenuously inculcated the practice of every moral duty from motives of piety. A former Disquisition has shewn that these facts are indisputable. But Christianity contains certain characteristics, which now demand the grateful attention of the Gentile world, as well as of the Jews.

The Christian Religion presents to the whole world, a brighter display of the divine Benignity, than was enjoyed before its promulgation: It enforces obedience to the divine commands, upon the most refined and exalted principles: and it promises infinitely superior remunerations.

CHAPTER I.

On the divine Benignity displayed in the Gospel.

We suppose that our readers will discern a very important *connection* between the subjects that have passed under distinct examination, in the course of our preceding Disquisitions, but, in so protracted a work, it may be necessary to refer, or to repeat, more than is desirable, in order to elucidate some subsequent principles, which are professedly founded upon others previously established. We are obliged to avail ourselves of this liberty, in order to do more ample justice to the important subject before us.

In our summary view of the arguments adduced in support of natural religion, we endeavoured to show that the character of Creator is strictly a *relative* character; that it intimately connects the great universal agent with all his works; for Power, Knowledge, Wisdom, and Goodness, respect *existences* and *operations*, actual or in prospect. We attempted

also to evince, that of all the divine perfections, Infinite Goodness is the most exalted. This is strictly and eminently *moral:* On this, *worth* is inscribed in the most legible characters. No other attribute can exceed or equal it in dignity, or in importance. Knowledge, Wisdom, and Power are subservient to its purposes; and its purposes are to diffuse all possible happiness among susceptible beings. We have also shewn, when we were investigating the nature of Goodness, that its desires of diffusing good are boundless; and its exercises can only be limited by a limited capacity. A Being, therefore, of unrestrained power, incessantly possessing the disposition to communicate good, must be incessantly operative in its production.*

But, notwithstanding the unlimited extent of the divine Benignity; notwithstanding the immutability of the divine character, yet the Wisdom which always selects the most proper means, for the accomplishment of beneficent designs, will make a more open display of the attribute, which best corresponds with the *particular state, circumstances, and character of its objects.* Like the Sun it may be obscured, at one period, by clouds dark and menacing; at

* See Theological Disq. on Natural Religion, Chap. II.

another, it may shine with peculiar brightness upon particular districts; but it always retains a plenitude of refulgence, diffusing its beneficial influence over every creature.

When we were tracing the rise and progress of the social virtues, we took occasion to observe that *Terror* is the earliest and most powerful principle of action, in ignorant and savage minds. This has the strongest hold in dispositions the most sordid and selfish, which are always strangers to superior motives. When *Hope* is principally in exercise, it has some other good in prospect, beyond that of escaping from evil; and although it may be purely *selfish* in its nature, yet it leads out of abject servility; it sets an object of *choice* before the mind, and advances some steps in moral culture. We observed, that although *Love* is the last of the operative affections, it is the noblest, and most influential, where it duly operates. Where it is sincere and ardent, it inspires a grateful solicitude to please, which pervades the minutest ramifications of duty.*

These are the laws which the supreme Creator

* See Ethic. T. Part II. Disq. 2. ch. 3, for a developement of these principles.

has inscribed upon our nature; and we shall see that he has acted conformably to them in his government of the moral world.

It was according to these principles that the Being who is essential Goodness, chose to vail the benignity of his nature, behind the irresistible majesty of his power, during the ages of gross ignorance and depravity of manners. Irresistible Power, being the first, nay the *only* attribute that commands the attention of brutal minds. For with this is closely connected the apprehension of evil, or the dread of punishment. Such is the influence of Dread, that it is able to destroy the strongest of the natural affections; for it has frequently induced barbarians to sacrifice their offspring, to appease the supposed anger of their gods. It was in correspondence with this state of mind, that the Sovereign of the universe discovered himself to the world, chiefly as the *Lord of Hosts*, the *God of battles*, *terrible* in his judgments; that he was induced to manifest his *irresistible might*, by repeated judgments. It was *Terror* alone which compelled the Egyptians to emancipate their slaves, and assist them in their emigration. The *Fear* that fell upon the nations facilitated the conquests of the Hebrews, and gave them an earlier establishment in the land of Canaan. The tremendous threats denounced

and reiterated chastisements, were more efficacious in preserving the Israelites, from being totally absorbed in the depravities of surrounding nations, than the most signal displays of the divine beneficence towards them.

That Being who destroyed the ancient world on account of the universal apostasy, suspended his exterminating judgments, respecting the Canaanites and the surrounding nations, until they were depraved beyond the power of reformation, by any natural means. But when their iniquities were full, and they became ripe for destruction, he shewed the *terrors of his wrath.* Yet, in the midst of his judgments, he manifested the discriminations of his mercy. Those among the Heathens whose attention was awakened, and who, by comparing the purity, dignity, and excellence of the Jewish religion, with the horrors that characterised their own, forsook the worshipping of images for the service of the true God, were, by the divine commands, cordially received; and they enjoyed many of the privileges and immunities of the Israelites; and, if we may thus speak, he shewed personal respect for those Heathens who revered his name. Of this, examples have been given, respecting Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, and Darius. Thus far did the wisdom of the Most High permit his

benignity to operate in favour of the Pagan world. But no apostles were expressly sent to convert them. It is most obvious that the Hebrews who first entered into the land of Canaan, were not formed for missionaries. They would themselves have been corrupted by the vicious practices and principles of these gross idolaters, instead of making converts to so pure a religion. Nor were there many of these Pagans whose minds were prepared to receive so refined a system of Theism.

In subsequent ages, when the Heathens had been taught, by severe experience, that the Jehovah of the Israelites was superior to the gods whom they served; prophets were occasionally appointed to alarm their fears, by denouncing the terrible judgments of God, against the enormities committed by particular nations; but this wrath was directed against their *Immoralities* alone, and not their theological Ignorance.

It was in consequence of this ignorant and depraved state of the human mind, that a knowledge of the God of Israel was introduced among the Pagans, by the name of the *Lord God Almighty;* the *King of Glory;* the *Lord mighty in battle.* It is repeatedly asserted by the prophets, that the Lord of *Hosts* is his name;

and it was, "that the Heathens may fear the name of the Lord."

The whole history of the *Jews*, as a distinct nation, informs us, that although the terrors of the Lord were suspended over them, yet they were abundantly favoured with consolations of *Hope*. Desirable objects were placed before their eyes, to draw them out of the abject servility of *fear*; to give them a *personal interest* in their faithful services, and to secure to them *a much larger portion of good*, than what is obtained by the mere exemption from evil. They were so far advanced in mental culture, that *Promises* of the most encouraging kind were largely intermixed with the threats. *Worldly prosperity* was ensured to them, upon the condition of their obedience.

This Principle pervades the whole of the Jewish Dispensation. It has already been shewn that their history consists, chiefly, of journals of their obedience, rebellions, repentances, and of the prosperous or calamitous results. They were severely chastised for their transgressions; but whenever they conformed to the divine commands, they were prosperous and happy. We shall therefore simply observe, that

the objects of Hope, as well as of punishment, placed before them, were such as would most powerfully influence minds incapable of being elevated above sensible objects. *Temporal* blessings, and *temporal* evils alone were presented to them. They immediately and unequivocally experienced, in their own persons, the just recompense of their conduct: and their moral history was faithfully recorded in their journals, for the admonition of subsequent ages. Such striking examples, which no one could doubt or deny, were better calculated to impress their minds, than any promises or threats respecting a future world; where their minds could not penetrate, and concerning which no reports could be made.

The Hope, therefore, of exemption from temporal calamities, and of possessing positive good, was proposed as the operative Principle, during the whole of the Jewish œconomy; and by this it was expected that the nation at large should be influenced. The more pious and considerate Subjects, under the divine government, were also duly impressed with the Goodness of the Lord, which shone conspicuously in the midst of his judgments: and although the grand injunction was, "Stand in awe, and sin not;" yet frequent exclamations of devout minds were,

"Oh that men would praise the Lord; for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever."

Love, although it is later in exercise, as we have already remarked, yet it is by far the most noble of our affections; and in its nature peculiarly operative. *Fear* seeks not only to escape, but to *elude*. It engages not in any voluntary services; for it never acts beyond absolute necessity. *Hope* has some specific object before it, and will perform the task for the sake of the result. It will discharge its duty in such a manner as to ensure the recompense; but it remains confined in the district of selfishness, and may be totally indifferent respecting any other object. But *Love* implies an *attachment;* an attachment to something apparently *good*. When Love respects the *Character* of a moral agent, it is placed upon what we discover to be *amiable*. We imagine that the object is *kind* and *benevolent*; or that he is *disposed* to communicate good, as opportunities may present. This has a natural tendency to inspire a reciprocal disposition. No one will deliberately offend, or neglect to oblige, the object whom he *loves*. He will rather seek to *anticipate* wishes; and where it is practicable, to *surprise* by some tokens of re-

spect. Love, of all the affections, is the most pleasant in its exercise. This renders it so dangerous when placed upon improper objects.

The objects which claim a title to our love, must be supposed to possess *worth*. A perception of worth, will inspire sentiments of respect and esteem, towards a *stranger*. On these perceptions of worth are engrafted particular Attachments, either from the actual reception of benefits, or by the assurance that plans of goodness are formed, and are operating in our favour. For these present us with personal proofs, that the Being who thus wills to do us good, is *benevolent* in his dispositions. Such acts of kindness have a tendency to awaken *gratitude*; which, as it were, *rivets* our affections, while it ennobles the recipient, under his humble consciousness of an obligation conferred upon him. Where this obligation is connected with extraordinary circumstances of condescension, or of extreme liberality in the Agent, to the affections of Love and Gratitude, will be united the emotions of *Admiration*; which accelerate every disposition to make the most grateful returns.

To these pleasing and dignified affections of *Love, Gratitude,* and *Admiration,* is the *Gospel Dispensation* peculiarly directed. These it principally seeks to call forth. Upon these are its

choicest motives to right conduct founded; and to bring these into exercise, is every attempt made which can impress a liberal and a grateful mind. Through the medium of this last Dispensation it is, that the Divine Benignity to the human race is fully displayed. It finally proclaims to mankind an important truth, which reason approves, which the apostle John was authorized to assert, and to which every page in the gospel history beareth record; God is Love. *Love*, universal, unwearied, inexhaustible, is the centre, from which the exercise of every moral or relative attribute is an emanation. It is the attribute which gives efficacy to wisdom and knowledge; rendering them productive of good to the extent of their exercise; and by which the awful attribute of irresistible power, becomes a source of consolation.

When we were particularly contemplating the nature of Benevolence, we attempted to trace its principal ramifications, according to the state and character of its immediate objects. It assumes the title of *liberality, pity, compassion, and commiseration, condescension, and mercy,* as it refers to the exigencies, helpless, distressed, humble state of the object, or to the nature and extent of his demerits. All these modifications of beneficence, are impressively manifested in

the Gospel of Christ. It not only represents the Deity as the inexhaustible source of good to all his creatures, but as exercising compassion towards the wretched; administering aid to the helpless; consoling the distressed, and proclaiming pardon to the guilty.

Such manifestations of benignity from God, under the character of an universal *Sovereign*, are calculated to excite the emotions of love, gratitude, and admiration, in every breast. But the truths revealed to us, in this last and best Dispensation, are still more animating. The Supreme Creator, in these latter days, proclaims himself to the astonished world, as the UNIVERSAL FATHER! He condescends to receive those whose nature is so distinct; whose powers are so feeble; whose characters are so undeserving; whose offences have been so numerous and habitual; into the *adoption of* SONS. This most interesting fact has justly called forth the admiration and astonishment of the beloved disciple John. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the SONS *of God*."

In a former Disquisition, on the nature of moral obligation, we minutely examined the religious principles which are most conducive to

the uniform practice of virtue; and we observed that, connected with a conviction of the Unity, Holiness, Knowledge, Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness, of Deity, the *Parental Character* presents us with a motive peculiarly interesting. By this we are encouraged to contemplate the great Lord of all, not as a *foreign cause* of some occasional good, but as the *Source of our existence;* as the universal Purveyor for a numerous and beloved offspring. In consequence of so honourable and intimate a relation; Obedience is no longer to be considered in the light of a *compact* simply, or the obligation of a *subject*, but as arising naturally from the relation of a *Son to a Parent.* By *Filiation* we are taught to consider every injunction, as a necessary prerequisite to future advancement; and the practice of virtue as a preparatory occupation, which is to qualify us for the enjoyment of the good destined to be our future portion. In the obedience of a Son, a refined sense of *justice* is also blended with the perception of advantage. Love and Gratitude are united with every other motive, and by these it is purified from the sordidness of mere self-interest.*

* See Eth. Treat. Part ii. On Moral Oblig. Sect. 4. Relig. Principles most conducive to virtue.

The relation between a Father and a Son, or a Child, is the closest relation in nature. It is a relation in which there is the least of *passion*, and the most of *affection*. It neither requires nor admits of violent transports; but an *inviolate attachment* becomes a steady uniform principle of action. Where it is respectably supported, the warm affection of the Parent receives the returns of love, gratitude, and obedience from the offspring. A Parent is the dignified source of existence. In this sense he considers his offspring, in the light of a peculiar kind of property; and over this property a perpetual watchfulness is exercised with anxious care. From every other species of property, the possessor expects to enjoy some kind of personal advantage; in this singular species the habitual solicitude of the Parent becomes a generous, liberal state of mind, prompting to *communicate;* expecting no other remuneration than the success of endeavours.

Such is the character, in which the Deity has finally condescended to make himself known to his creatures. He publicly avows the title of *Parent*, over his moral and intellectual offspring. Man, and man alone, of the numerous beings inhabiting the globe, can be dignified with the

appellation of a *child*, or a *son of God*. Notwithstanding the infinite distance between the great Creator, and the most exalted of his productions, he deigns to call himself the *God and Father* of the human race. Man is made in the image of God, by the endowment of moral and intellectual powers. This endowment enables him to possess a resemblance in the enjoyment of eternal felicity; and he who created the endowment, is resolved to bestow the gift, by adopting man into the family of heaven.

The character of Universal Father, was concealed from the most ancient and gross idolaters. It was of too refined and exalted a nature, for the ages of palpable darkness and depravity of manners. Nor were the extensive privileges of Filiation made known to the Israelites. Very few are the instances in which any reference is made to the character; and it is always by way of reproach, reproof, or admonition: never with the cordiality of a reconciled Parent. Moses, expostulating with this rebellious people, exclaims, "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise? Is not He thy *Father* that has bought thee? Has he not made thee?" In the same manner the prophet Malachi expostulates: "A son honoureth his *father*, and a servant his master: if, then, I be a *father*,

where is mine honour; and if I be a master, where is my fear?" Again; "Have we not all *one Father?* Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?" Thus the prophet Isaiah, in pleading with Jehovah, complains, "Thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us because of our iniquity. But now, O Lord! thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we are all the work of thine hand."

In these, and a few other instances, the Israelites were occasionally reminded of a filial relation, subsisting between them and their Creator; but the leading character by which he manifested himself to them, was not that of a *Father*. He sometimes styled himself the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, in honour of their faith and piety; sometimes the God of Israel, as they were the select and chosen people. When Moses received the commission to liberate the Israelites from their bondage, "God said unto Moses, I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, in the name of *God Almighty*; but by my name *Jehovah* was I not known unto them." The great I AM, the true, the living, the universal Sovereign; in contradistinction to the despicable idols, the

nonentities, to which the corrupt imaginations of an ignorant world, had transferred all authority and all honour.

To neither Jews nor Heathens, therefore, was the title of *Universal Father* clearly promulgated, in the manner which characterises and distinguishes the dispensation that is emphatically termed, a *Dispensation of Grace.*

This honour, the most exalted which can possibly be conferred upon the human race, is introduced by the promised *Messiah.* He takes the lead in this new designation; as he is the medium through whom its blessings are imparted to us. Adam, by his disobedience, lost his title to be the head of a favoured race. The righteous Noah had the honour of introducing a new progeny. Abraham, by his ready obedience, became the father of the faithful. The wise, the meek, and intrepid Moses was qualified, and appointed, to rescue the people of God from captivity; to become their legislator, to watch over their morals, and to conduct them to the Land of Canaan. These were the faithful *Servants* of the Most High; and they were greatly honoured. But " God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time

past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his *Son*, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." After this divine Messenger had been initiated into his office, by the baptism of John, he received, " from God the Father, honour and glory; when there came a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved *Son* in whom I am well pleased."* This unequalled mark of approbation from heaven was repeated at the hour of his transfiguration: " Behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."—" For this is he of whom the prophet spake, " Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles," &c. &c.†

Being thus authorised and sanctioned to consider God as his heavenly Father, the language he reverentially adopted, manifests his habitual sense of the exalted honour. When he speaks of himself individually, it is under the humble appellation of *the Son of Man*; but as he was declared to be the *Son of God*, with power; in his official, or mediatorial character, he delighted in

* 2 Pet. ch. i. 17. † Is. ch. xlii. v. 1.

the title. To his Father he ascribes all the powers with which he was invested. "Verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what thing soever he doth, these also doth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things which himself doth."* All his addresses to heaven were as praying to the *Father;* and from the *Father* he expected all his consolations and support. In the agonies of his mind, previous to his being taken before his judges, as an afflicted, but obedient Son, he prayed, "saying, *Father*, if thou be willing, remove this cup; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done;" and he described his ascension as *going to the Father.*

Nor does he appropriate this honoured title to himself exclusively, in consequence of the perfection of his obedience. That Being whom he denominates *his* Father, he uniformly considers as the Father of *his disciples* also. He exhorted all who came to him, in order to receive instructions from him, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." "Love your enemies, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven. Be ye merciful, as your Father who is in heaven

* John v. 19.

is merciful." "Call no man Father," says he, "upon earth, for one is your Father, who is in heaven." "When ye pray, say our Father who art in heaven." As he was taking a final leave of his disciples, he consoled their minds with this assurance, "I ascend to *my* Father and *your* Father, *my* God and *your* God."*

The Apostles, after they had been fully instructed in the nature of Christianity, adopted a similar language. The usual salutation of St. Paul in his Epistles is, "Grace be with you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. All his admonitions, reproofs, exhortations, and encouragements, are in perfect unison with the declaration made in his Epistle to the Romans. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the *sons* of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear (which was the prevalent spirit, and the predominant sensation under the Jewish œconomy,) but ye have received the spirit of *Adoption*, whereby we cry, abba Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the *children* of God; and if children, then *Heirs*; Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ." The Apos-

* Ch. viii. v. 14. † See Note A.

tle John also declares, that "those who deny the Son, have not the Father; he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father." Our fellowship is with the Father and the Son." Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the *Sons* of God."

The above will be considered, by all those who are conversant with the New Testament, as small specimens of the language familiarly used by the primitive disciples of Christ; but it is a language which no one, not even the most distinguished Prophets, were authorised to use, with similar boldness and currency, under the former Dispensation.

The Paternal Character of the Deity is represented to us, in the sacred records, in different points of view. He is our Father, as we are, in our moral and intellectual nature, created in his own Image. Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? The disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, and all who were disposed to be instructed by him, were more particularly encouraged to consider God as their Father, and to pray unto him under that venerable character. The injunction was to all his hearers indiscriminately, "When ye pray, say, "our Father who is in heaven." But those who yield unto him the cheerful obedi-

ence of Sons, he regards with the complacency of an affectionate and approving Parent. They are his, in the true spirit of *adoption*, and for all its purposes. "These he hath predestinated into the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." "Blessed are the peace-makers," saith our Saviour, "for they shall be called the *children* of God." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, that ye may be the *children* of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise," &c. &c.

CHAPTER II.

On the Parental Character of the Deity, revealed to the World in the Gospel of Christ.

THE Supreme Being, by thus assuming the character of a Parent, presents us, in that single term, with an epitome of his designs respecting us, and expectations from us; and every explicit doctrine of Christianity, presents us with the most encouraging and consoling developement of the character.

The ideas universally entertained of an earthly Parent, who possesses every title to respect, is, not only that he is the source of existence to his offspring, but that he hath an affectionate concern for their welfare; which he assiduously endeavours to promote to the extent of his abilities; and according to the conceptions he may have formed of the nature of well-being, and of the means by which it can be obtained.

A wise and affectionate Parent makes a suit-

able provision for the sustenance of his family; —is most willing to pardon the faults and imperfections of his children; consults the interest of every member; gives them the best advice in the most proper manner;—he instructs them in every thing he deems to be useful; and bestows upon them such an education that they may exist in the world, with comfort and honour to themselves, and usefulness to others. He carefully studies their characters and dispositions, that he may exert a directing, encouraging, or controuling influence over them. He is grieved, without being greatly surprised at the aberrations of thoughtless and impetuous youth; which he is even more inclined to pity than to resent. He contemplates their docility and improving virtues, with affectionate complacency and delight. Their insensibility to all his anxious endeavours, and the perverse returns of obstinate disobedience, may justly excite his anger; but it is the anger of a *Parent*, it proceeds from *affection*. It is a stranger to a spirit of revenge, and implacable resentment. His severest chastisements are with a view to *reformation*; and they are inflicted with an agonizing reluctance. He views reformation with delight; and the anxious resentments he suffered, during their continuance in the paths of folly, are succeeded

by transports of joy. He cheerfully pardons, and readily forgets, their preceding misconduct; and his whole attention is directed to the promotion of their future welfare. In proportion to the degrees of wisdom and goodness in a parent, do these sentiments and dispositions prevail; in proportion to the success of his endeavours, does he enjoy satisfaction and complacency: *for the prosperity of his Children constitutes the happiness of a Father.*

Such are the characteristics of a wise and good Parent, and correspondent with such principles does the Supreme Parent represent himself as acting towards us in the gospel of his Son.

Although he is far exalted above the cares and fears, the transports of vexation or of joy, which agitate the mind of man, yet he has in this, as well as in many other instances, adopted the language of man, to convince us that perfect benevolence, in union with perfect wisdom and knowledge, are operating for purposes which require the aid of passions and affections in the human breast; these being in us the appointed stimulants to action. Thus are we assured, that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth

them that fear him." He is also represented, by the prophet Hosea, as expostulating with the rebellious Israelites, in the following pathetic manner; "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Adinah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim," &c. In the parable of the penitent Prodigal, our Saviour has represented the Deity in the character of an affectionate Parent, eager to embrace the offender, and obliterating his just resentments, by transports of joy at his reformation.

When the Being who has implanted such strong affections in the human breast, to render Parents the assiduous guardians of their children's happiness, condescends to acknowledge himself to be the father of Man, we may rest assured that his conduct will not be less assiduous, less benignant, less wise, or less successful.

The divine Beneficence is displayed through all animated nature. From his inexhaustible and infinitely various stores, does God supply

the wants of every living creature; and for all his rational offspring he amply provides, as for members of the same extensive family. They indiscriminately share in the common blessings of life. He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. So numerous are the bounties of his providence, enjoyed by the thoughtless and disobedient, that every distinct act of vice is a distinct act of ingratitude. Every offence committed against our heavenly Father, is a trespass upon some indulgence. It is the abuse of some gift, or of some propensity, which he has conferred or implanted, for a beneficent purpose. Every law that is violated, is an injunction for some good. All those acts of disobedience which are represented as provoking the Divine wrath, and exposing the offender to his hot di s pleasure, consist in disobedience to rules which the Universal Parent has prescribed, solely for the happy government of his family. He hates Sin because he knows that it leads to misery. He loves Virtue or Righteousness, because he knows that all her paths are paths of peace and happiness. He is angry with the Wicked every day, because their mad extravagancies are incessantly disturbing the order, harmony, and welfare of his family. He is pleased with the Righ-

ous, because they are executing his designs. He condescends to consider them as *fellow workers* with himself in the promotion of good. The most anxious and assiduous Parent does not watch over the prosperity of his children, with an attention that can emulate the universally watchful eye of that Being, who numbereth the hair of our heads; nor can a sparrow fall to the ground unnoticed by him. As Man is the intelligent offspring of God, he has not only made abundant provision for his animal wants, but the Divine conduct is directed towards him as a rational, moral, responsible Agent; capable of higher pursuits than those which concern animal life, and an expectant of a future destiny.

Of all the creatures of God, *Man alone* is capable of abusing the gift of providence; of being subjected to the laws of morality, and of *transgressing* them; of *violating* the dictates of his conscience, and of being inimical to his own happiness.

This Capacity proceeds from a power which constitutes, in him, an honourable distinction from every other creature in the universe; the power of acting, in every case, according to the dictates of his Will, without the inevitable compulsion of physical laws, or being invaria-

bly subjected to the contracted laws of animal instinct.

We attempted, in a former work, to trace the sources of human aberrations, and of the miseries they occasion; we shall at present simply state that they were many, great, and as extensive as the rational family of heaven.

The Histories of the ancient world, both sacred and profane, are no other than the histories of an universal depravity; of a disobedience which terminated in the grossest ignorance, and the most inveterate habits of vice and impiety; beyond the power of reform, by any efforts merely human. The history of their religions consists in copious details of superstitious and barbarous rites, which were a disgrace to the first glimmerings of reason; and which deprived the heart of its natural affections. Their noblest exploits consisted of various usurpations, devastations, and shedding of human blood in copious streams. Beings of the same species, were perpetually at variance, which is contrary to the usual decency observed in the brute creation; and the children of the Great Parent, were plundering and murdering each other, in every habitable corner of the globe.

We read much in the Old Testament of the

fierce anger of the Lord, of his executing his wrath, taking vengeance of his adversaries. Such expressions were a dreadful accommodation to the character of the times; imitating, as it were, the impassioned resentments and threatenings, which parents so frequently express, upon the obstinate and wearisome disobedience of their children. Such language repeatedly uttered by the prophets of the Most High, sufficiently evince the wretched state of morals in the world; and it vindicates his wisdom in concealing, as much as the incessant effusion of his goodness would admit, the essential benignity of his nature. For, no expressions of indignation and abhorrence, could surpass the atrocities prevalent among the nations. No threats could exceed their deserts. Even the superior instructions and condescending kindnesses, which pervaded the Jewish Dispensation, were not sufficient to keep that perverse people from the contaminations of the surrounding Pagans. They still exposed themselves to the severest expostulations of Jehovah, and to the occasional operations of terror. It was even requisite to announce their moral laws with an awful solemnity, which made all the people tremble. This was, as Moses informed them, that "the *fear* of God might be before their eyes, that they sinned not."

Although at the time of our Saviour's advent, there might be a considerable refinement in manners, compared with the grosser ignorance and barbarities of more ancient days; yet mankind still remained in a wretched state respecting morals; forgetful of the God who made them, hostile to each other, and slaves to inordinate lusts.

The Multitude, at every period, in every nation, and under every form of government, were still ignorant and depraved. Their Sovereigns were inflated with pride and ambition; and most of their Philosophers were absorbed and bewildered in vain and unprofitable speculations, which had not the most remote connection with human happiness, or the duties of morality. No one has been able to confute the charge brought against the whole human race, by the Apostle Paul, who includes them "all under sin." His representation of the depraved state of the heathen world, in his epistle to the Romans, will save us the trouble of a particular enlargement under this head. He maintains that, previous to their melancholy rebellion against their heavenly Father, they possessed the power and the means of knowing and of serving him: "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen,

being understood from the things that are made: even his eternal power and godhead. But they were without excuse, because, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became foolish; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Wherefore God gave them up to every lust, and to every vicious propensity and practice, that can deprave and degrade human beings. They were rendered destitute of personal virtue, became strangers to the social virtues essential to social happiness; and indulged in every species of unrighteousness, which rendered every man a scourge to his neighbour, and an enemy to his God.

The Jewish nation was ready to admit that all the Gentiles were justly in a state of condemnation; and this people flattered themselves that they were, exclusively, the favourites of heaven. But at no one period of their political existence, did they continue eminent for their piety and virtue; and they were frequently plunged into a state of degeneracy, which is

astonishing, when we reflect upon the numerous advantages they had enjoyed for a series of ages. Although their chastisements finally produced a permanent reform from idolatry, yet their religion had lost its moral influence upon their minds; consisting entirely in a servile conformity to its rituals, with the additional absurd injunctions of their Doctors and Rabbies. At the time of our Saviour's appearance, they were extremely depraved. They were, as a nation, destitute of every moral principle; making void the law, as the rule of right, by their traditions. The depravity of their teachers is fully evinced, by the asperity with which they are reproved, by the meek and humble Jesus. He terms them, "the blind leaders of the blind; a generation of vipers, who make void the law by their traditions; who devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; are zealous to make proselytes, whom they leave much worse than they found; appearing outwardly righteous unto men, but within are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Thus St. Paul, expostulating with both Jews and Gentiles, in his epistle to the Romans, pronounces that "they are all under sin; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become

unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one," &c.*

These facts clearly evince, that the parental kindness of our heavenly Father, was not called into exercise by the *Obedience*, or by the *tractable Dispositions* of his family. They are always represented as being "children of disobedience, and sold under sin." But having long waited to be gracious, he seized the first moment which his wisdom discovered, to display to an apostate world, the essential Benignity of his character; that they may not any longer be governed by *Terror*, but be drawn by the *cords of Love*, those bonds which are most worthy of man. He who knows all things, knew that, notwithstanding the degenerate state of both Jews and Gentiles, a competent number of Individuals among them were capable of being influenced by kindness. He knew that to manifest the riches of his grace, would not be entirely to cast pearls before swine; that some would duly appreciate the precious gift, and communicate it to others. He foresaw, that in consequence of the free, and more civilized intercourse subsisting, at this period, between the different nations of the world, the seed sown in the land of Judea, and the adjacent

* See Rom. iii. 11. 17.

countries, would now take root, flourish, and finally be disseminated over the earth. The fulness of time was now come, to commence his operations upon the best affections of the human heart. He, who in former days, was jealous of his honour, and vindicated his rights by tremendous judgments, now expects that all should join in the acclamation, " Glory to God in the highest, for sending peace on earth, and good will towards men." Such are the considerations which induced the Apostle John to exclaim, " herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," &c. St. Paul observes, " God commendeth his love towards us in that, while we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us." Although the whole family of God was considered as in a state of rebellion and absolute enmity, it was still the object of his parental care and affection. Innumerable are the expressions, in the sacred writings, which vindicate the Universal Father from the weak partialities, which so frequently disgrace the parental character among men. He obviously *wills* that the reconciliation shall be as extensive as the disaffection. Although, in the progressive operations of his plan, some must have the precedency, yet their privileges are not exclu-

sive; they will finally terminate in the benefit of others. Hence it is that Christ is denominated the *Saviour of the World.* "I am the light of the World," says its inspired Instructor; "I came not to judge, but to save the World. All the World is become guilty before God; "but he is reconciling the World to himself, not imputing to them their transgressions." It was ordained that the gospel should be preached among all nations, that *all* might be saved. When St. Paul was miraculously converted, he received an especial commission to go to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified."

The Jewish nation had been, for ages, intentionally separated from the Pagan world, not to be contaminated by them. While this important process was in continuance, there appeared to be a partiality and predilection not easily reconcileable with the character of a wise Parent; but in reality it was that a path might be prepared for the Gentiles: that "through *them* the Gentiles also might receive the ministry of reconciliation." "The middle wall of partition is at length broken down." All

enmity, which had subsisted in former days, is now abolished. They "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

The Deity having thus openly assumed the parental character, the current of language, through the medium of all his ministers, is changed into a correspondent tone. Menaces are sparingly, and as it were reluctantly, denounced. Entreaties and encouragements are most abundant. Obedience to the law given by Moses, was fenced round by tremendous threats, because of the hardness of their hearts. *Curses* were solemnly denounced against every separate act of disobedience.* The mild Saviour of mankind introduces his ministry with *Benedictions;* and holds forth promises, according to the degrees of excellence in moral worth. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven: Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth: Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God:

* See the dreadful list in the 26th and 27th chapters of Deuteronomy.

Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God, &c. &c. Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Saint Paul, who had imbibed so much of the genuine spirit of Christianity, delights to imitate the persuasive language of his Master; and he manifests the utmost solicitude that the beneficent designs of the gospel may be answered among all men. To the Corinthians he writes, "Now then we are embassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." To the Romans he writes, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us."

It is this mildness, this compassionate earnestness, for the spiritual welfare of all the children of God, which entitles the gospel of Jesus to the epithet *evangelical*, the *good news*, the *gospel of peace*. The Father is termed the *God of peace*.

The kingdom of God is said to be *joy* and *peace*. We have *peace* with God through Christ; and the favourite benediction pronounced by the apostle Paul in his numerous epistles is, "Now may the God of *peace* fill you with all joy, and *peace*, in believing." "*Peace* be with you, from God our father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

It is on account of the greatness and extent of the Divine Benignity, in receiving the disobedient into favour, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, that Christianity is exclusively termed a *Dispensation of Grace*. "The law was given by Moses, but *Grace* and truth came by Jesus Christ; and of his fulness we receive *Grace* upon grace." "We are justified freely by his *Grace*." "When sin abounded, *Grace* did much more abound," &c. &c. &c. '*Grace* be unto you, and peace from God our father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ,' is the usual salutation of Paul, at the commencement, and at the close of his epistles.

The word *Grace*, which is perpetually used by the apostles, with an obvious predilection, is necessarily borrowed from those peculiar acts of kindness and condescension, which are occasionally manifested by a Superior to an Inferior; and accordingto its application, it possess e ous degrees of strength. But as all human beings

are by nature equal; as the greatest distinctions among men are comparatively trivial, this term cannot, in any human transaction, possess the emphasis and energy which it possesses, in its application to the salvation of the human race. It is now consecrated, as it were, by the general consent. It is set apart to those objects exclusively. It is now used in the Scriptures, and almost universally by Theologians, to distinguish the manifestations of the Divine Benignity in the *pardon* and *acceptance* of his offending offspring, from every act of special favour, which one human being can confer upon another.*

When a wise parent pardons the offences of his offspring, it is always under the persuasion that they *repent*, and that *reformation* will follow. No father can receive his son into favour, and love him with the love of complacency, which constitutes the happiness of the filial character, while he remains disobedient. Where a just cause of displeasure subsists, that cause must be removed before displeasure can cease. But in the mind of a judicious and benevolent parent, the chief cause of resentment consists in the perception, that the conduct of his son is injurious to re-

* See Note B.

putation or comfort, or dangerous to his future prospects in life. His resentments at the neglect of wise and salutary counsels, arise from parental affection; and when he proceeds to chastisement, it is with the hopes of producing reformation. We may farther assert, that where repentance and contrition are sincere, the subject himself will always manifest ardent endeavours to reform. To confess sins of which we are totally unconscious, or concerning which we are perfectly indifferent, is irreverent and trifling; and to entreat for pardon, without the sorrow which leads to reformation, is an insult. A disposition to future obedience must be implanted, before this pardon can be pronounced, and former misdemeanours be obliterated from the remembrance; and this disposition will render the penitent inquisitive respecting that line of conduct, which the offended parent has commanded him to pursue.

The grand object of a wise parent is to direct his son into the paths which may lead to his future well-being. Whatever may be the particular destination, it will be watched over as containing the means of Good. Whatever may be the situation, profession, or occupation intended, ardent wishes are entertained that the son may become duly qualified for the station; and

that he may live happily, usefully, and respectably in the world.

It must be the object of the universal Parent to make his intelligent and moral offspring happy; and if the love and practice of personal and social virtue, be the only means of securing permanent, and diffusing general happiness, if the cultivation of every devout affection be the inexhaustible source of the most exalted felicity, both in this, and in the future world; such must be the pre-requisites, the qualifications which he will demand? Without these, pardon itself could not confer happiness. It could solely consist in a remission of the chastisement due to the offended laws; but it would leave the wretched Being, to the misery naturally resulting from disorderly passions and affections.

But since right conduct is essential to well-being, all *Ignorance* respecting right conduct must be removed; and since personal and social duties are numerous and complicated; since they have a reference to every action in life, and even to the thoughts and dispositions of the mind, *the Science of right conduct* becomes the most extensive, as it is the most important, of all sciences. Worthy dispositions must be directed into the proper channel, or the beneficial affections cannot be produced. If pro-

found respect, and inward unrivalled affections for a wise and good parent, be the best guarantee of steadfast obedience, as well as the perpetual sources of happiness to an obedient son, the supreme happiness of a devout mind will consist of those choicest ingredients, in all intelligent and depending beings, *love, gratitude, admiration, hope, and joy.* This is an elevation of soul most earnestly to be desired; but not hastily obtained.

It is, therefore, a characteristic excellence of our holy religion, that it traces the minutest of those duties we owe to ourselves, our neighbours, and our Creator. The divine Teacher has republished and enforced the law of morals; which was neglected and become almost forgotten and obsolete, through every part of the habitable world. It was scarcely known by the Heathen nations, although they were advanced, at this period, beyond their grosser manners of the early ages. It is true there appeared, occasionally, certain philosophers who professed to teach the principles of virtue and morality; to the small circle of their followers; whose active and penetrating minds paid more attention to these subjects, than is paid by many of the professed disciples of Jesus; and they deeply revered those moral maxims,

which some Christians have neglected, or treated with a degree of contempt; yet, compared with the doctrines of our Divine master himself, their conceptions were partial, their precepts circumscribed, and sometimes erroneous; their influence was feeble, and they were devoid of authority. Nor could they enforce their doctrines, by motives which were able to impress the minds of the multitude, who were slaves to the customs of their country, and habits of their countrymen; and whose best affections were confined to their families or their clans. The Jews had been assiduously instructed by their lawgiver Moses, in all the precepts of religion and morality. The duties of uprightness, integrity, fidelity, and compassion towards the poor, the stranger within their gates, and their slaves, were assiduously inculcated. Efforts were incessantly made to impress upon their minds the fear of God, and obedience to his commands. The variations and gradations instituted in their numerous sacrifices, taught them the various degrees of culpability attendant upon a breach of the divine commands. But their moral conduct was, at the most favourable period, very disproportioned to their advantages; and at the time of our Saviour's appearance they were become ignorant and depraved. Those who profess-

ed religion, were hypocritical formalists, making void the law of God by their tradition, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; explaining away the true spirit both of virtue and religion, depending upon all the frivolities of Superstition for acceptance with God; and substituting an eagerness for rituals of their own designing, in the place of a pious zeal for the essential duties of religion.

It was, therefore, an important part of our Saviour's mission, to instruct the world in the necessity, excellence, and extent of virtuous conduct, both personal and social. He not only censured, with asperity, every vice which degrades human nature, but he attempted to inspire an inward love of Virtue. He enforced that inward purity of mind, that uprightness and benevolence of heart, which would be the most effectual preservation against every overt act of injustice, cruelty, oppression; and would check the emotions of hatred, envy, malice, and revenge, covetousness, and every impure desire. He incessantly enjoined upon them that inward love both of God and of man, which would best produce a fulfilment of the law. That we may not mistake in our conceptions respecting the obligations of Justice, in the minuter offices of

life, and to prevent the discordant effects of inordinate self-love, and the partialities to which it inclines, he proposes a practical rule, within the comprehension of every individual, applicable to every possible case, and the equity of which no man can dispute. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them." The strict observance of this precept would constitute the perfection of a moral character; prevent all the disorders of social life; be productive of the most perfect harmony, cordiality, and reciprocal confidence, and thus render the present state of things a paradise of bliss. Teaching the great and important doctrine that the whole human race are of the family of heaven, the children of one common parent, he gave them the new commandment, that all mankind should love as brethren. Love is incessantly enjoined upon his followers, as the grand principle of action; as being the most influential affection, and the source of individual happiness. Love to God, and Love to man. The manifestations of this Love, according to his Ethics, are no longer to be confined to friends, neighbours, and countrymen; but they are to be extended to strangers and enemies. "If ye love them that love you, what do ye more than others? Verily I say unto

you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that persecute and despitefully use you: That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust."

We have a beautiful specimen of his moral tuition in the celebrated Sermon on the Mount, in which a partial, or an ostentatious observance of the duties of morality, is severely condemned, the absurdity of substituting the letter for the spirit of the divine laws, exposed; and the gradations in the scale of moral duties are pointed out by correspondent gradations in the beatitudes announced. In opposition to the maxims fondly cherished by *pride* and *self-conceit*, he pronounces a blessing on the poor in spirit; assuring them that such alone are the true subjects of the kingdom of heaven. He promises consolation to the mourner; a security to the meek; plenitude of enjoyment to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; forgiveness to the merciful: he assures the pure in heart, that they shall be deemed worthy to stand in the presence of God: he promises the peacemakers, that they shall be called the children of God; and exhorts those who are persecuted and

reviled, to *rejoice* and *be exceeding glad*, for great shall be their reward in heaven.

St. Paul, who had imbibed so much of the spirit of his Divine master, presents us with an excellent comment upon his moral precepts, when he tells us, that the performance of actions, right and proper in themselves, even such sacrifices as shall most attract the admiration of the public, are not acceptable in the sight of God, unless they spring from the grand principle of *Benevolence.* A principle which constitutes the ornament of a moral character; containing within itself the only motive that is truly dignified and refined; that is perpetually, universally, and minutely operative; and that can inspire the mind of the Agent with complacential satisfaction, in the midst of the greatest sufferings which he may endure, or sacrifices he may make. Without this, the most splendid actions are performed from unworthy motives, and they possess merely the *semblance* of virtue. Eloquence, knowledge, miraculous power, the most liberal gifts bestowed upon the poor and needy, even the loss of life itself, however they may prove beneficial to others, if they be not accompanied with the spirit of *Benevolence,* they are destitute of that principle which communicates inward satisfaction, and secures the favour of God.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not *Charity*, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, &c. Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies they shall fail, whether there be tongues they shall cease, whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."

Some have supposed it to be an imperfection in the Christian scheme of Ethics, that it neither inculcates patriotism, nor particularly enforces the duty of friendship.

The objections which are made upon a superficial view of a subject, are seldom formidable; and they may prove nothing so incontestably as the ignorance and precipitancy of the objector. Had the species of patriotism most correspondent with the ideas of those who assume the title of patriots, been officially enjoined by the divine messenger, the object of Christianity would have been destroyed. National animosities, and the destructive wars they occasion, would have received the full sanction of heaven. The whole human race could never have been considered as *brethren*; nor the kind and peaceful offices of fraternal affection be diffused over all mankind. Christian patriotism consists in re-

specting the genuine rights of all men; in being cautious not to give offence, prompt to communicate benefits and diffuse blessings. This species of patriotism will ensure the peace and prosperity of the country whence it originates, by disposing its very enemies to be at peace with them; this will effectually secure the alliance of heaven, while it enjoys the honour of promoting the happiness of distant regions.

The beneficial and ingratiating offices of friendship, naturally result from the general principle of love. The distinctions and ramifications of this principle, will always be correspondent with the degrees of relationship, and of social intercourse, in union with similarities in temper, situations, pursuits, or opportunities, whic hmay present themselves of developing characters, or rendering reciprocal services. Friendships must form of themselves, without a mandate; for no mandate could select the object, or point out the degrees of intimacy. The nature and expediency of friendship are illustrated by the conduct of our Saviour. That his philanthropy extended to all men, no one has disputed. He signalized himself by loving his enemies, but he was no stranger to the sweets of private friendship. This is shown by his warm attachment to his disciples; by his selecting from these the man, whose mildness

of manners was most congenial with his own. Such was his affection for Lazarus and his sisters, that he could not refrain from weeping over the distress he had resolved to remove. His example, therefore, recommends the cultivation of friendship with worthy objects.

Another characteristic excellence of Christianity, consists in the *perfect Example* of our elder brother, its founder. "He was made perfect in all things, that we might tread in his steps."

It is a proverb founded on universal experience, that "example carries more force than precept." In Precept, abstractedly considered, there is a dictatorial superiority which is not always acceptable or pleasing. Wise lessons may convince the judgment, without interesting the heart. A full conviction of truths, of their propriety, of their importance, will not always produce correspondent dispositions. Teachers themselves too often confirm the assertion. They too often manifest how much easier it is to know, and to dictate what is right, than habitually to practise it. Good example is, as it were, a *vivification* of right principles. It rouses them from an inert state; renders them active; and

they cannot be active without appearing lovely and engaging. Good example manifests at the same instant, what *ought* to be done, what *can* be done, in what *manner* it is to be performed, and its *beneficial effects*. We have observed upon a former occasion, that the mind is impressed with different degrees of force, according to the *manner* in which information is conveyed to us. The nearer it approaches to ocular perception, the greater its influence. It is the same with Instruction. The Example of Christ verifies the position. It had so great an influence upon his disciples, that they loved him with unfeigned and unremitted affection; and it disposed them to imitate his conduct, as well as to attend to his instructions. The multitudes which followed him were attracted by his beneficent virtues, perhaps more than by the purity of his precepts. They were compelled to admire the singular consistency of *his* character, who lived uniformly as he preached. For he thus presented them with a striking contrast to the conduct of their professed teachers, the Scribes and the Pharisees. The minute details of his character which are transmitted to us at this remote period, although it is a weakened substitute for personal converse, yet it is calculated to impress our minds with the love of vir-

tue and piety, infinitely more than the didactic lessons of the speculative Moralist, should they embrace the whole duty of man.

These principles are inherent in human nature; and He who has placed them within us, has acted in a manner correspondent to them. He has appointed the Saviour of the world to be our precursor in the paths of righteousness. It became him, in all things, to have the pre-eminence; and, as the elder brother of the whole family of heaven, hath he shewn to us, in what manner we should conduct ourselves towards our Heavenly Father, and towards his numerous offspring, according to their various stations and characters in life. He was, from his youth, educated and disciplined to the office. As a perfect model was necessary, perfect Goodness was made manifest in the flesh. In this Divine Messenger we perceive the brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express image of the perfection and benevolence of his moral character. He taught as no Being, uninspired or inspired, had ever taught; and he acted as no human Being, before him, had ever acted. "In him did all fulness dwell;" and though, according to the humility of his temper, he called himself the Son of Man, yet in the perfection of his moral character, was he pre-eminently the *Son of God.*

These are facts, which every Christian professes to believe. They are infinitely more interesting to us than subjects of mere speculation, could we arrive at a demonstration of their truth.

Much, infinitely too much, has been said by Scholastic Divines, from the earlier Ages of Christianity down to the present period, about metaphysical natures and essences; concerning which no man has obtained light and knowledge sufficient to satisfy his own mind, or illuminate the minds of others. Many will boldly pronounce concerning the physical Nature of the Deity, although they be ignorant of *their own.* They attempt to fathom the universal Spirit, before they know in what consists the Spirit of a Man, or the vitality of an Insect. After the reiterated endeavours and anxious researches of ages, the human mind, with its keenest intellects, has not advanced one step in its knowledge of Essences. Actual existences, and the properties of existent beings, are the province of Man. These are within his compass, and they demand his researches; for with these alone are his interests immediately connected. Could the most perfect knowledge of Essences be obtained, it would merely gratify inquisitive, we had almost said impertinent,

curiosity; for, abstracted from *properties*, of which essence is considered as a *substratum*, could we comprehend its *nature*, the knowledge would be of no utility. *Qualities* or *properties*, and their powers of acting, are of infinite moment to us. From them our apprehensions are formed; upon them our hopes are placed; and upon them our very existence may depend. Of these it is most desirable that our knowledge should be extensive, and our conceptions clear; for they constitute the *intrinsic value of every substance*, and of every being that exists. The value and beauty of a Diamond consists in its purity, brilliancy, density and durability. Deprive it of these, by searching after its essence, and what is obtained in their place? But "who by searching expects to find out God?" Let contemplation abstract from the Deity himself, his attributes natural and relative, what remains to occupy the mind but impenetrable darkness? What remains that could be useful to the creatures of God? No Power to act, no Wisdom to plan, no Goodness to bless! Why then should human intellects, given us for purposes of real utility, be employed, exhausted, and wasted, upon a subject which no man can fathom, and by which no man can profit?

The perfection of character which shone so

conspicuously in our Divine Master, is infinitely interesting. This may prove of essential benefit. It presents us with a living model for our imitation; and the more we imitate, the greater advances shall we make in a conformity to the injunction, which cannot be completely obeyed, "Be ye perfect as your Father who is in heaven is perfect."

The other prophets and ministers of God, notwithstanding their exemplary piety, had many imperfections in their characters. They could not therefore be proposed as perfect models for imitation. This honour was reserved for the great Prophet, "who was made in all things like unto his brethren, sin only excepted" It is evidently expedient that every model should be perfect. This is peculiarly necessary in morals. If the least imperfection were intermixed, human propensities would imitate these the soonest, and retain them the longest. Had not this messenger from God been perfect in all things, a divine sanction would have been given to every defect transcribed into the copy.

He completely fulfilled the injunctions which he gave, to "love the Lord our God, with all the heart, with all the might and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves." His obedience to the Divine commands was complete; and it

was proclaimed, by a voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In private life he was dutiful to his parents, affectionate to his friends. In his public character he exemplified all the moral precepts which he taught. He instructed the ignorant, relieved the wants of the indigent to the extent of his means, was compassionate to the distressed, forgiving to his enemies, contented in a state of voluntary poverty. It was as his meat and his drink to do the will of his heavenly Father. He was patient under sufferings. Notwithstanding his exalted office, and the extraordinary powers with which he was endowed, he was meek and lowly of heart. The social virtues, which are the most numerous, can only be exercised and displayed by mixing with society. This was so eminently his conduct, that haughty bigots accused him of being "a friend to publicans and sinners." He was in truth their friend, by seeking every opportunity to instruct them, with mild suavity of manners; while the immaculate purity of his character inspired them with love and veneration for his person. No one applied to him in vain; and he wept over those impending evils he was not authorized to prevent.

Men who have been the most celebrated for their virtues, have never been distinguished for a per-

fect uniformity of character. The peculiarities in their dispositions, stations, or inducements, have generally given a peculiar celebrity to some of their actions, and generally thrown a veil over the many frailties and imperfections which still surrounded them. The Son of God was actuated by principles which were steadfastly and uniformly operative. He made no selection in his observance of the divine commands, but he became equally obedient in all things unto death itself, even the death of the cross. He was mild, but intrepid; he hated sin, without being irritated against the sinner. There was but one vice which he reproved with peculiar severity; the vice of *hypocrisy*; which is a despicable attempt to deceive both God and Man; and it springs up in a soil which cannot possibly produce a single virtue. He sought not popular applause, but he did not refuse those honours which magnified his office. When he caused his light to shine before men with peculiar lustre, it was that they might glorify his heavenly Father. He did not fly from the world in order to avoid its contagions. His devotional retirements prepared him for active life, and the good performed in active life, made his retirements delightful.

In our inquiries concerning the most influential motives to the uniform practice of every virtue, we attempted to prove that rational conceptions of the Divine nature and character contain these motives, far beyond every other source. The history of Jesus indicates that from this source he derived his aids. He spent those hours of leisure which others devote to rest or amusements, in communion with his heavenly Father; retiring to mountains and deserts for uninterrupted meditation and prayer. It was through the medium of his devotions that he derived succours from above; and he assures us that "his heavenly Father was willing to hear him in all things." It was from this source that he enjoyed those inward consolations which more than compensated for the wretchedness of his outward state; which fortified him against the numerous evils of life; and supported his mind under the incessant prospect of a painful and ignominious death. In this devout intercourse with his heavenly Father, he received the assurances of those exalted honours which awaited him, as the Saviour of the world; and he was thus animated and strengthened for the arduous conflicts he had to encounter. "For the joy that was set before him, he finally

endured the cross, and despised the shame." Of this we are informed by an inspired apostle.

The same apostle also, not only says that "he was made perfect through sufferings," but that it "became him to become in all things like unto his brethren," and therefore he was to be "tempted like as we are, that he might be able to succour those that are tempted." It is probable that a peculiar reference is thus made to the temptations to which he was exposed in the wilderness, as recorded by the evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke. If we attend minutely to the nature of those conflicts, previous to his entering upon his public ministry, we shall learn that they were consonant with the peculiarities of his important office; and that he obtained a triumph over them, which entitled him to become the triumphant captain of our salvation.

We are told that after he had submitted to the ordinance of baptism, "he was led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil; and that after he had fasted forty days and forty nights, the tempter came unto him." Adam was tried, in his official character, as the representative of the human race. He was unequal to the contest and was disgraced. Abraham was tried, was found faithful, and was rewarded with the honour of introducing the first Dispensation, replete with blessings to his posterity, and also to

the Gentile world. Christ was also tried, resisted, shewed himself to be the beloved Son of God, in whom he was well pleased; and he purchased the honour of becoming the Saviour of mankind.

It is our earnest desire to avoid controversy upon subjects of inferior importance. We endeavour to collect and arrange facts generally admitted, without drawing any other inferences than those which are of practical importance; or may in any respect serve to elucidate the plan of God in the salvation of Man. We shall not therefore attempt to explain the precise manner in which our Saviour was tried, when it is said that "he was led by the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." We shall leave it to others to solve the difficulties surrounding the scenery, which is here represented as having taken place; and confine our attention to the characteristic peculiarities of the temptations, or trials themselves.

It appears, from the history given us of all the miracles wrought by our Saviour, that their important objects were, to publish and confirm the truth of his mission from the Father of Mercies, by relieving the distresses of others; for they were all, without exception, of a beneficial nature. After fasting forty days and forty nights, devoting that time to meditation

and devout intercourse with his heavenly Father, the powers of nature were exhausted. He was an hungered in the wilderness, without the possibility of receiving a supply of food, by any natural means. He was therefore strongly induced to work a miracle, solely for his own relief, that he might receive an instantaneous supply to his wants. We are told, that the tempter came to him and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that this stone be made bread." Since thou art endowed with the power of working miracles, commence by converting this power to thine own relief. A suggestion so contrary to the nature of his mission, and to the object in possessing this endowment, he rejected with disdain. He was convinced that the God, whose instrument and agent he was appointed to become, was able to support him, without such a perversion of his power to a purpose personal and selfish. He answered, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." A dependence upon the promises of God is the firmest support, and it will be more acceptable to him than this perversion of my power.

The next temptation was of a presumptuous nature. It was suggested to him, that a convincing proof of his being of a truth the

Son of God, and probably the most striking and expeditious method of establishing the divinity of his mission, in the eyes of the populace, would be to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, amidst the numerous worshippers; applying to himself, and to the present occasion, those assurances of divine support given to the Godly, which were expressed by the Psalmist in such animated language. It is written, "he shall give his angels charge over thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." This miracle, had it been performed, would have been destitute of the character inscribed upon every other, that of Beneficence. It would have appeared vain and ostentatious. It would have been an attempt to introducc his acceptance, as the promised Messiah, in a hasty and unauthorised manner; and it was a presumptuous application of a general promise. The suggestion was silenced by adverting to the admonition, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." It were an abuse of the consoling promise of protection, for the Son of God to have exposed himself to dangers, neither commanded nor authorised by his heavenly Father.

A third temptation presented itself on the

submit of a high mountain; whence there was an extensive view of the land of Palestine and its vicinities. Here the suggestions of Ambition made a momentary impression. If, like others, he would consent to worship the god of this world, and bow the knee to Mammon, their was every prospect of his rising to the summit of worldly grandeur. The eager expectations of the people were directed towards him. Thousands were in hourly expectation of a deliverer from the Roman Yoke; tens of thousands would have joined him, had he openly assumed that character; and he would have been hailed as the Saviour of his country.

This flattering prospect was also rejected with disdain. "Get thee behind me, Satan," was the answer; and the effectual check to this ambitious project. "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." "My kingdom is not of this world." I am appointed to sway the sceptre of righteousness, and to obtain an *immortal* crown, by being faithful unto death, in the execution of the commission with which I am charged. It is added, that "when satan had left him, angels came and ministered unto him." His conquest was complete, and he enjoyed consolations from above.

We may recall several circumstances which have a tendency to corroborate the above statement. The acceptance of the commission from heaven could not be *compulsive*. It was *optional*. "He freely gave himself for us." He declares, that he had "power to lay down his life, and power to take it up." When Peter, in his precipitate zeal, drew his sword in defence of his master, Jesus said unto him, "Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of Angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

The general survey we have been taking of the character and conduct of our Saviour, as a model for our imitation, manifests his infinite superiority to every other moral and religious character upon record. He has fulfilled all righteousness; and he alone. Noah, in consequence of his ready obedience to the divine command, in building the ark, found favour with God. Abraham, for his more exemplary obedience, was more highly honoured. Moses was the chief of the ancient prophets. But still they were surrounded by moral imperfections, and their obedience was limited and par-

tial. His was complete. In him were united the different kinds of Merit, mentioned in a preceding dissertation. The absolute merit of perfect Righteousness; transcendent merit when compared with every other moralist; and the conditional merit which gave him a claim to become a Prince, and a Saviour. If, in the hour of temptation, he had performed a miracle merely for his own support, he would have imitated the offence of Moses; the miracle would have been wrought, through a presumptuous confidence in himself, and a distrust of his God. Had he sought publicity by throwing himself from the temple, he would have been much too hasty in the execution of the office assigned to him; he would have trespassed upon the design for which he was endowed with miraculous gifts; and his trust in the protection of his heavenly Father, would have been marked with culpability. Had he worshipped the God of this world, he might have subjected the world to himself; he might have been surrounded with honours superior to those enjoyed by common Sovereigns; but he would have forfeited the character of the Messiah, and the special favour of his God.

But his submission to this violent and opprobrious death, with patience and resignation, has

a singularity in it peculiar to Jesus Christ. Although the Evils of life are so numerous, and many of them so afflictive, they generally arrive in an unexpected manner. Calamities befall us suddenly and unforeseen. We do not feel the previous torments of Prescience. When Heroes meet dangers, they still expect to escape. When they risk their lives, it is under the impulse of some particular passion, or their hopes predominate over their fears. But the Saviour of the world clearly foresaw his death; and he fully anticipated the corporeal and mental agonies he was to endure. It was this fore-knowledge of his future sufferings operating upon his mind, which occasioned that dreadful conflict in the garden of Gethsemane, and compelled him to supplicate, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" although it was with a determination to submit to the Divine will. The mildness and benevolence which shone in every action of his life, and his sympathy with the distressed, marked the Sensibility of his frame. The hardened Indian is trained up in habitual preparation, for the painful death which may possibly befall him, according to the chances of war, as they are termed. He supports his agonies, when they arrive, with a phrenzy of rage and pride; and he calls aloud upon his

adherents and dependents for *Revenge.* The benevolence of a friend, the feelings of mercy, the firm patience of a devout mind, were in their full exercise with Jesus, in the midst of his agonies. His exclamations were, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He consoled a malefactor, who was crucified with him; and he expired calmly resigning his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father.

Whoever duly considers these facts, will not be surprised at the exclamation of a Pagan Centurion, " Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Another mode by which a wise Parent manifests his concern for the real welfare of his offspring, consists in the observance of a strict Discipline, or the infliction of such Chastisements, as the character and conduct of the son may render necessary; in order to correct the vices and irregularities to which he may be addicted; and to implant in him a predilection for those pursuits and particular duties, upon which his future acceptance and success may depend. This treatment may not be correspondent to the expectations of the son, nor to the conceptions he had formed of parental tenderness; but it may constitute an essential part of a proper education, and be the result of true affection. A judicious parent anxiously watches

over the peculiar dispositions of his children; and wherever he discerns any evil propensities, whether they be to sloth, presumption, self-conceit, inordinate self-love, or to carelessness, and inattention, or undue attachment to pleasures, he will not permit that instinctive fondness implanted in his own nature, to prevent the temporary severities, and restrictions which affection, directed by prudence, will dictate. If advice and admonitions should not prove effectual, he seeks to place his son in a situation which may teach him to reflect upon his faults, by alarming his fears, or by inflicting upon him a salutary degree of suffering.

We have already enlarged upon the essential benefits which naturally flow from *Afflictions*.* They awaken to consideration, where milder inducements have failed; and they convince of errors, where the most persuasive reasoning has been in vain. They bring to the decisive test of *experience*, the most seducing qualities of objects. They demonstrate the fallacy of those sanguine expectations which had animated to the pursuit of them; and they prove, not only to our reason, but to our *feelings*, how much we were deceived in our opinions concerning them.

* See Ethical Treat. p. 259. Pat II.

A man of observation and experience knows, that if he do not correct the incipient failings of his pupil, they will become inveterate habits; and that the injurious consequences flowing from them, must remain with him; or that they must be finally corrected in a ruder and severer manner, when the advantages which might have been derived from a contrary deportment, shall be lost for ever.

In the formation of the Christian character, there is frequently a conflict between gratifications and duty; between that influence which sensible objects exert upon our perceptions and feelings, and those pursuits which are enjoined by better principles, and which our reason acknowledges should be preferred. If Passions should become too powerful for Reason, if the torrent of ideas, which every excited passion brings with it, to encourage or justify its indulgence, should silence the voice of reason or of conscience, it is of the utmost importance, that the pernicious consequence of improper conduct, should also excite *their* appropriate feelings; and bring with them *their* current of ideas, influential in an opposite direction: and although deep sorrow, self-reproach, and remorse, are so extremely painful, they may awaken and stimulate to salutary exertions which cannot be

made without them. If a series of uninterrupted prosperity be calculated to render the pampered child of fortune presumptuous, haughty, sensual, and place him so far above personal calamities as to render him careless and indifferent, respecting the miseries of others, he must be consigned over to adversity. This may become a profitable, although unwelcome teacher of humanity, diffidence, and also of sympathy with brethren in misfortune.

Such are the corrections which the heavenly Father employs for his beloved, although perverse offspring. These are so necessary in themselves, and so interwoven with the Divine plan, that, notwithstanding the blessedness which is so frequently pronounced upon the Righteous, and the promises that they shall enjoy, even in this world, a superiority of happiness, compared with the wicked, yet to no one is there a promise of exemption from sufferings. Nay, the Pious are informed that these shall be their lot; which can alone proceed from their beneficial influence. The pious David confesses that before he was afflicted he went astray. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, places this subject in a very interesting point of view, in his quotation of a passage from the Proverbs of Solomon. " My son despise not thou the chasten-

ing of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reproved of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourges every son whom he receiveth. If thou endurest chastisement, God dealeth with you as with *Sons.* For what Son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Moreover, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be subject to the father of our spirits, and live? For they for a few days chastened us for their own pleasure,—or in the gratification of their resentments; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastisement for the present is joyous but grievous, nevertheless, it afterwards yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby."*

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Romans, says "I glory in tribulation, also knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed:"—and in his letter to the Corinthians, he says, "I rejoice that you were made sorrowful, (by a preceding letter) but that you sorrowed to repentance. For you were made sorrow-

* Heb. xii. 5.

ful after a godly manner: godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of;" and all the primitive Christians were forewarned that "through much tribulation they were to enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

It is observable that such language is very different from that which was current among the ancient Jews. Although there be occasional observations relative to the beneficial tendency of afflictions, yet the evils of life were generally denounced as *judgments*, without being stated as marks of parental affection. The judgments were chiefly directed against the sin of Idolatry, and the atrocious crimes that were fostered by it. Temporal prosperity was promised to them as a nation, on the condition of their obedience to the law of Moses. The consolations of a future state were not revealed to them, as constituting a part of the Divine plan; or as the immediate object of the dispensation. The promises and threatenings were of a temporal nature; and as we have shewn in a former disquisition, their blessings and afflictions were always correspondent to their national character. Christians having higher expectations, and assurances of a nature infinitely superior, they are informed that, having "exceeding great and precious promises," they are not to

expect exemption from the evils of life, in consequence of their attachment to the Gospel; and that their fidelity to the cause may expose them to peculiar trials and sufferings. Yet they are still exhorted to *rejoice,* because their present sufferings would "work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

No other principles can entitle the lovers of virtue and piety to enjoy complacency in distress, but those of Christianity. The Author of this new Dispensation, and his faithful apostles, frequently exhort Christians to *rejoice* under circumstances that would overwhelm the mind with anguish and despair, were it destitute of the hopes which Christianity inspires. These alone can render a compliance with the injunction practicable, "rejoice always, and again I say rejoice."

With such hopes the injunction is not extravagant; nor its observance impracticable. It is perfectly consonant with a governing principle in the human mind. In every case, the possession, or the assured prospect of a greater good, will more than console for a privation of advantages, comparatively trivial in their nature and duration. The man who may have suffered pecuniary losses, to an amount which would have destroyed his peace, will cheerfully bear this temporary inconvenience, when con-

soled with the promise of a large estate, at no distant period. The Christian, who is practically convinced, that all things are under the direction of a reconciled complacential father, and of consequence are working together for his good; who compares eternity with time, and the glories to be revealed with either the joys or sufferings of a transitory life, cannot feel the chagrin which torments the breasts of those whose hopes are confined within its limits. He may possess his soul in peace, and habitually enjoy a state of mind, totally unknown to those whose expectations terminate with the present state of existence. Experience has put these principles to the test, and found them triumphant. Saint Paul declares, "none of these things move me," because he felt the force of the assertion, "that the light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Martyrs have enjoyed transports in the horrors of a prison; have exulted in the flames; and they have been envied by those who attempted to torment them.

When the happy parent perceives that the object of his tender care is desirous of improving, in every qualification required, he takes

great pleasure in administering every assistance that he may deem necessary for the purpose; not only by placing him in suitable situations, and furnishing him with ample means, but by personally enabling him to surmount those difficulties, to which his own powers may not be fully adequate. Yet in such cases, *co-operation* alone is employed. It is always expected that the Son should exert his own endeavours to the utmost. Otherways the Father would foster in his son a spirit of indolence and inattention; and deprive him of the advantages of beneficial habits, which are alone to be acquired by his own application.

The assistance of the Heavenly Father is promised to his willing and obedient offspring, in a similar manner, and for a similar object; which is to train them up in the dispositions and habits indispensably requisite for their future destination. Under the Jewish Dispensation, the Being, presence, and agency of the Deity were continually placed before the eyes of the Israelites. Every thing was ascribed to his interposition. Their successes, and defeats, notwithstanding the obvious interference of natural causes, were considered as immediate acts of remuneration or of chastisement from God. To him they looked for worldly pros-

perity. They were ordered to call upon him in the day of trouble, with the assurance that their devout and penitential supplications should be favourably received. These aids were expected from Jehovah, both as the ruler of the whole earth, and as the God of Israel, in a more particular manner; and, generally speaking, they referred the good to be enjoyed, or the evils endured, to the present state of things Hence is he uniformly styled their God, their helper, their deliverer, the God of their Salvation.

Under the Christian Dispensation, the divine superintendence and agency is always represented as referring to more important purposes. It is chiefly promised as being co-operative with the virtuous and pious endeavours of the converts to this new religion; that they may "walk worthy of the holy vocation wherewith they are called;" that they may make an exemplary progress in all the graces and virtues of the Christian character, and become prepared for a more exalted inheritance, than the descendants from Abraham had been encouraged to expect. In his paternal character, the Supreme Being professes to become more intimately connected with the true disciples of his beloved Son. The language of our Saviour is, "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my

Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." He frequently represents *himself* as the immediate agent of superior aid. "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be in the midst of them to bless them. Lo I am with you always to the end of the world." Sometimes these divine aids are ascribed to the Holy Ghost, in the character of the Comforter. "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." "The Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." Hence it is that the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, declares, "I can do all things, through Christ that strengtheneth me." To the Thessalonians he writes, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our father, who hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work." The form of his epistolary salutations is, "the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." "The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." In writing to the Corinthian converts,

he expostulates, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Ch. iii. 16.

Whatever conceptions we may form concerning these different modes of expression, or whatever hypothetic opinions may be entertained explanatory of them, it must be admitted that this is a style peculiar to the Gospel Dispensation; and that it must convey truths of peculiar importance.

Those "who are fathers after the flesh," and deserve the title, are prompt to afford assistance, wherever it may appear to be necessary, without its being previously desired. They seldom make it a condition that aid shall be solicited. From this conduct the supreme Parent deviates in his wisdom. He *enjoins* it upon his offspring to apply to the throne of grace as a duty and a condition. To those alone who ask, is a promise given that they shall receive, and to those who seek, that they shall find. They are ordered to pray without ceasing. It is enjoined upon them to intercede for every thing necessary for their daily support; for protection from danger; power to resist evil; wisdom to direct, as well as for the forgiveness of their offences; and also for their brethren of mankind, of every class, and in every situation,

and of every character. Upon these terms ample assistance and final success are secured; for it is written, "every one that asketh receiveth, he that seeketh shall find, to him that knocketh it shall be opened." "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." "I exhort," says the Apostle Paul, "that supplications, prayer, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," says the Apostle James, "availeth much." These assertions are doubtless founded upon the encouraging assurances of their master. "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

The above representations strongly indicate that the great Being who, under the Christian œconomy, hath "revealed himself to us, as our Heavenly Father," is not reluctant to bestow every necessary aid. He is more disposed to communicate, than we are to receive; nor can his benevolent disposition towards us be aug-

mented by our entreaties. We must, therefore, conclude that he has instituted prayer and supplication as a condition proposed, in order to produce some specific and salutary influence upon the minds of his intelligent offspring; that they may duly appreciate, and improve the requisite blessings.

The presence, support, and assistance, afforded by earthly parents, are felt and acknowledged, without the possibility of a doubt. The great Parent, being invisible, all his specific operations are unknown to us, excepting those which are recognized to be miraculous. As we perpetually observe the operations of cause and effect, we are prone to ascribe every thing to the course of nature solely, to secondary causes, to physical agency, to the assistance of our friends, and those surrounding us;—we are disposed to place our expectations upon our own exertions, and to presume that the whole merit of a fortunate issue results from our own sagacity and prudence. Acts of devotion have a tendency to correct these errors, which lead to practical atheism. He who totally neglects to pray to his heavenly father, evinces that he has forgotten the superintendence of his providence; which may be introductory to the denial of his existence.

It is, therefore, in order to impress our minds, with a deep and habitual sense of the existence, perfections, and unwearied agency of God, of our being the creatures of his power, the subjects of his government, and the children of his family, deriving every thing we possess and enjoy, every blessing we desire and expect, from his unmerited bounty, that the duty of prayer is so frequently and peremptorily enjoined. Nor can any one who entertains just ideas of the frailties and imperfections of human nature, and has formed reverential conceptions of the great God, question for a moment the importance of the duty, and the privileges enjoyed by our being encouraged to perform it.

We have observed, upon a former occasion, that the formidable enemies to right conduct are *Ignorance*, the *undue influence of sensible objects*, and *inordinate self-love;* that, after our Ignorance shall be removed, a perception of what is right is frequently, and in some cases incessantly, counteracted by the influence of surrounding objects, and the prevalence of the desires and propensities of the instant; that the predominant love of self, even in its less violent exertions, will obscure the judgment, pervert justice, and render us reluctant to obey the calls of humanity. We observed, also, that the dispositions

and propensities so destructive to virtue, and of which the habitual indulgence constitutes a vicious and impious character, possess the minds of the ignorant, thoughtless, and inconsiderate, who blindly follow the impulse of their passions, or depraved inclinations, without controul; but that the love and practice of virtue demands a mental effort. They are the result of thought and reflection. The mind is obliged to call in the aid of various inducements, sufficiently potent to counteract the propensities of the moment.

As these inducements are of a different nature and character from the objects of seduction, and as they are remote from the sight, they can alone be summoned, collected, and rendered effectual, by the strongest energies of the mind. In some cases, the excitement of very painful emotions may be necessary to combat the auxiliaries of vice: such as fear, dread, remorse. Sometimes the influence of the milder and more pleasing affections of love, joy, hope, gratitude, may be efficacious; and thus may a resolution to resist temptation be excited, or quickened, and rendered triumphant, by the most respectable of all motives.

There cannot be a principle so efficacious in producing these happy effects as a spirit of devo-

tion. The man who delights to meditate upon the being and perfections of his God, who enters into his presence, as it were, for this solemn purpose; who has an impressive sense of his immediate inspection, and unerring knowledge of the inmost secrets of the heart; who confides in the perfect wisdom of his government, and is convinced that unwearied benevolence directs all his operations; who knows that virtue and piety are the delight of heaven; and that they are enjoined, solely to promote the happiness of man: he who firmly believes in the assurance that it shall be well with the righteous; and that the lamented infirmities of his nature, though they may retard his felicity, will not ultimately expose him to the divine displeasure: such a man, in his devout addresses to his heavenly father, collects into one centre, into one focus, the choicest, and the most ardent of motives that can influence the human breast. He consecrates every legitimate passion and affection, and renders it subservient to his progress in goodness. The irresistible Power of God, inspires him with a sacred dread; but there is more of sublimity than of terror in its nature; and its influence is salutary, for it produces the fear of offending. He contemplates the infinite Majesty of God, with a pleasing

awe, which may enable him equally to despise the smiles or frowns of a prince, who would seduce him from his allegiance to the universal sovereign. He contemplates the boundless Wisdom of God, with a cheerful conviction that he is under its guidance, conducting him through every dangerous intricacy, and protecting him from the fatal consequences of his own follies. Nor can he meditate upon the infinite Benignity of God, without possessing the confidence of hope, or the exhilarations of joy. He now considers the severest evils of life, which are resented by the Inconsiderate and Profane, as acts of injustice and cruelty, in the light of parental chastisement, inspiring a calm and dignified patience and resignation of mind; and leaving no other anxiety than, that his sufferings may produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness. When he meditates upon the contrast between a created and uncreated Being, extreme imbecility and almighty power, moral depravity and moral perfection, the eternal God and a creature of yesterday, whose breath tomorrow will fail him, he is astonished at the condescension, which assumes the *paternal character;* and which permits so distant a being to address the universal Sovereign as *our father who is in heaven.* Thus is he clothed with the deepest humility,

by the very act which proves him to be the Son of the most high God!

To the devout Mind, at these moments, the pleasures of sin can have no allurements. It soars above all those pursuits of wealth and ambition which reason condemns, and which are inimical to the possession of greater riches, and more exalted honours. It views the votaries of vicious pleasures with contempt. It considers the most vivid pleasures of the wicked as transcient sparks, leaving a dismal gloom all around them, and destroying every desirable prospect. It looks upon the wilful transgressor with sensations of horror. It knows that he is a *fool who makes a mock at sin*, in every sense of the word; although he may not be able to decide which preponderates, the folly or the base ingratitude of the character.

Can any mode be devised to strengthen the *social* affections, or cherish a spirit of *universal Philanthropy*, equal to a cordial compliance with the exhortation of St. Paul, "I exhort that supplications, prayers, and intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty?" and the assurance given, that "this is good and acceptable in the sight of

God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth?" Would not that sordid selfishness, which is the grand source of all the disorders and miseries suff red by mankind, be effectually restrained and subdued, were every one who assumes the Christian character, seriously to consider the whole human race as his *Brethren*, as often as he professes to call upon the name of his heavenly Father, and to pray that "his kingdom may come, and his will be done, on earth as it is in heaven?" Will he dare to resent every petty injury, from the delusive conception that he is a *man of spirit*, or a *man of honour*, when he recollects before the throne of offended majesty, that the forgiveness of others, is a prerequisite to the pardon of his own offences? Would human beings rashly precipitate themselves into all the horrors of war, or christians immolate christians, on the altars of interest, ambition, or theological hypothesis, did they consider themselves as *children* of the same family, *joint heirs* of the same promises; and who expect to be saved through the same mediator between God and Man, the Man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all?"

Since the devotion of the heart hath a natural tendency to produce such blessed effects, so

essential to the Christian character, so essential to peace on earth, and to a preparation for the kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness, the duty of Prayer is no superfluous or unnecessary duty enjoined upon us by our heavenly Father; although his benevolent dispositions and purposes respecting us, cannot be augmented by the most earnest intreaties.

To pray, is a natural propensity of the human mind. It has been indulged by all who believe that there is a power above them, however crude and absurd the ideas they may have formed of such a power. It is the universal language of imbecility in distress, and of conscious guilt. The most Presumptuous have recourse to it in the hour of extreme danger; and the most Profane will call upon the Lord to have mercy upon them, under the prospect of suffering for their folly. On the other hand, that sublimity of character which shone with unlimited lustre in the Saviour of the world, was acquired and secured by an habitual converse with his heavenly Father. It was from this source that he received instruction, miraculous power, consolation, strength, and resolution suited to the nature of his office, the severity of his trials, and the infinite importance of his mission. We are not authorised to expect, that the most devout

and habitual converse with heaven, will render any of his disciples perfect, like their Divine master; but it will inspire them with dispositions which lead towards perfection. It will enable them to combat with vice, and resist temptation. It will strengthen virtuous resolutions, reward them with many consolations, and cherish the affections the most sublime in themselves, and the most conducive to happiness, love, admiration, and gratitude towards the father of mercies, and the God of all consolations.

It is not known in what manner, or to what an extent, assistance will be communicated. The duty is enjoined, and aid is promised; and with these we are to rest satisfied and thankful. The obscurity of the subject hath induced many theologians to pay extraordinary attention to it, but without adequate success; and opinions have been formed bordering upon injurious extremes, though in opposite directions. Some Christians have treated the doctrine of divine assistance, in such a manner as to confound it, in every case, with the miraculous operations of the Deity. The language most familiar to them would favour the presumption, that every good thought, and every good action proceeds from an immediate influence of the spirit upon the mind,

as much as the supply of manna in the wilderness, or the gushing of water from the rock, was the immediate effect of Divine agency, in the days of Moses. They acknowledge indeed that God operates in the use of means; but, according to their statement, the use of the means is entirely superfluous. Did these means not possess some degree of efficacy, they would lose their character; and though we may not ascertain the degrees of their efficacy, it is natural to suppose that, in many cases, it may be competent to the desired effect.

These confused Ideas lead to other inconsistencies in religious opinions; for they are entertained by those who think it their duty to exhort men to make efforts which are, according to their system, totally impracticable. After declaring, in the most positive and explicit manner, that man can do nothing of himself, with what consistency can the unregenerate sinner be exhorted to pray for Divine grace, to change his heart? For, if he pray with the sincerity and earnestness, they acknowledge to be requisite, either the blessing, for which he intercedes, was communicated before he made the attempt, or he has been successful without it.

This doctrine is not only a solecism, but it is injurious. It has a tendency to drive the uncon-

verted into despair, or to impute the want of Grace to a neglect in the Deity, rather than in themselves. While those, who imagine themselves to be thus exclusively favoured, will indulge presumption and spiritual pride; of every species of pride the most unbecoming and troublesome. For whoever thinks that he is under the immediate influence of heaven, in any particular case, must, in that instance, assume infallibility to himself, to the great annoyance of more modest Christians.

Nor are these sentiments more inconsistent with reason, than they are with the moral history of the world. The whole plan of providence is obviously founded upon a respect to the freedom of choice in the human breast, and a determination to employ natural causes, in order to direct this freedominto its proper channel, to the utmost extent of their influence. Physical and moral powers are the instruments of God for good, and he will not dishonour them by acting as if they were unnecessary or superfluous.

The whole history of the Jewish Dispensation proves and illustrates the remarks that were made, in our preliminary observations to a preceding Disquisition; for it is the history of the natural means, which were employed to

the extent of their powers, in order to purify a particular people from the dross of idolatry, for the benefit of the world. Every miracle wrought did not consist in a personal change of heart; it was either to surmount adventitious difficulties, which could not have been removed by natural means, or it was such a demonstration of the divine Majesty and Might, as had a natural tendency to inspire sentiments of awe and veneration.

Every servant of God selected to accomplish his purposes, possessed a previous adaptation. Had Noah not been a righteous man, he would not have been appointed to re-people the world. Abraham evinced the piety of his character before he received the promise, that "in him should all the nations of the earth be blessed." Moses was a man of superior education and superior capacities; and in place of being seduced by the splendour of a court, "he refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter; chusing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Nor was any one of the prophets miraculously converted from profligacy, in order to be invested with the prophetic character.

Notwithstanding the Christian Religion is emphatically a Dispensation of Grace and Mer-

cy, yet it gives no intimations that this grace shall immediately operate upon the individual minds of the wicked. The only promise which they can claim is forgiveness, and acceptance into the Divine favour, upon their sincere repentance. There is but one instance of miraculous conversion upon record, which is that of St. Paul. His extraordinary services, as an apostle of Christ, sufficiently evince, *why* he thus became a chosen vessel. The ardour of his zeal, and the superior powers of his mind, were now enlisted in the promotion of that religion which he had persecuted with vehemence. Although a Jew of the strictest sect, he became the eminent apostle of the Gentiles. He made every effort to compensate for his crime. He considered himself as a "debtor both to Jew and Gentile;" and he devoted his whole life to a discharge of the debt. His conversion, therefore, deserved a miracle, for it was performed for the benefit of the Christian world. Instructions, example, exhortations, admonitions, and warnings, the most liberal promises of pardon and of remuneration, were placed before a sinful race, as means and motives. These are also the primary manifestations of Grace, in the gospel of Christ. These are expected to work; and if they be not operative, it is presumptuous to expect supernatural aid.

These proceed from God; and they are precursers of every other mark of parental affection.

Wherever these implanted conviction, and excited right dispositions of mind, the most ample promises of all requisite aid were given. Every one is commanded to seek before he can expect to find, to *ask* before he can expect to receive. It was the complaint of Jesus, ye *will not* come unto me that ye might have life. A complaint which would have been unnecessary, had it been the plan of providence primarily to influence individual minds. The compassionate Saviour might also have spared himself those foreboding horrors, and pathetic lamentations, poured forth over the impending fate of the Jewish Nation for their wickedness, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often *would* I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and *ye would not*."

The above remarks clearly evince that the supreme Parent, acts according to those maxims of wisdom, which he has implanted in the human breast. He manifests a parental disposition to *assist and co-operate*; but he fully expects, as a prerequisite, that they should duly exercise all those powers with which he has endowed them. Those

who are disposed to work out their salvation with an anxiety proportioned to the object, it is his good pleasure to assist, both to will and to do, in such a manner as shall make their calling and election sure.*

Some philosophical Christians, on the other hand, maintain that the whole benefit of prayer consists in the deep and reverential impression made upon the mind of the Supplicant, when he presents himself immediately in the presence of his Maker, adoring his perfections, confessing his own transgressions, imperfections, wants, and incessant dependence upon the divine bounty. They allege, that it is inconsistent with just sentiments, respecting the immutability of the divine nature, and a reflection upon his permanent benevolence, to suppose that he can be induced by our intreaties to change his designs ; or be inspired with a disposition to grant blessings which he had been reluctant to bestow ; and they deem it more rational to confine all these strong promises to the peculiar state and exigences of the apostles and primitive Christians, by which they were enabled to establish a new religion among men, and encounter the peculiar difficulties and dangers to which they were exposed.

* See Note C.

This statement appears to be philosophical, and yet it is obviously unnatural. It opposes the first sentiment which arises in the mind of every mortal, in every age, under every system of religion, when he is prompted, in the hour of danger and distress, to seek assistance beyond the power of mortals to bestow. The very act of supplication implies the expectance of a boon, which might not have been granted without it. The explanation is also much too circuitous to animate devotion, and it has a natural tendency to render devotion languid. The apostle James does not appear to be of this sentiment, when he asserts that " the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much ;" for the assertion does not refer to the devout affections excited in the mind of the supplicant, but to its effects on the state and condition of the subjects of prayer. When it is enjoined upon the devout Christian to pray that he may not be led into temptation, but delivered from evil, he is taught to expect something more immediate than, that in the natural course of things he may be preserved from seductions and calamities to which he is naturally exposed ; for he prays that the course of things may not prove inimical to him, according to their nature and tendency. For if he should have a

full assurance that every thing will take place according to an immutable preordination, this assurance could not inspire him with that earnest fervent prayer which availeth much.

We must also observe, that the position which confines the promise of superior aid to the primitive Christians, is gratuitous. It draws a line which no one expression of scripture has warranted, and which its current language loudly opposes. Nor is the difference between the primitive Christians and their successors, in many cases, so great as to render superior assistance absolutely necessary to the former, and unnecessary to the latter.

The assistance promised, and administered to the Apostles and primitive Converts, was of different kinds. They were endowed with powers openly miraculous, which gave weight and authenticity to their mission, and enabled them to promulgate the truths of Christianity both to Jews and Gentiles. They enjoyed also more secret and occasional aid, by which their minds were illuminated; their conduct in particular cases was directed; the energies of their souls were augmented. They acquired active courage, to face every danger, and encounter every difficulty; and patient courage to endure every hardship, and suffer every disgrace. In such

cases was their strength always rendered equal to their day. "Though weak in themselves, they were strong in the Lord, and the power of his might." St. Paul declared, that he could do all things through Christ that strengthened him; and the whole of his history proved the truth of his declaration.

The miraculous gifts have ceased of course. Their purpose was fully accomplished in the establishment of Christianity. But it is possible, nay it is probable, that in every age, christians of every class may be exposed to such dangers, difficulties, and temptations, as demand superior aid. We are taught to infer, that the agonies of the perfect Jesus would have been too much for his susceptible mind, had he not received support and consolation from above. It is universally admitted that the apostles were supported in their conflicts, by their having received the Comforter; but other christians, as well as the Apostles, have suffered persecution for righteousness sake. They have manifested similar courage. They have been raised above the horrors of their situation. They have been inexpressibly happy in a prison, and have gloried in the Cross of Christ, as they were conducted to the flames. Were the natural powers equal to such conflicts, a mind like that of St.

Paul would have required no farther aid. If he was not sufficient for these things, the sufficiency cannot be expected to reside in more common Christians. In fact, human powers have their natural limits. The firmest resolution may be shaken and subdued, when the combatant is placed in new and untried situations. At these moments, the less a christian confides in his own strength, the firmer his confidence reposed in Divine support, the more will his nerves be braced for the conflict; and the more certain will he be of gaining the victory.

But let us examine whether the above sentiment be so philosophical as its abettors suppose.

We acknowledge that the Deity is immutable in his nature, but we must also acknowledge that he is necessarily active. His operations must be incessant, or he is not always the same. In what manner he is incessantly operative, is a secret no one can disclose. Nor can we discover what particulars are included in our received axioms concerning the laws of nature, and the agencies of cause and effect. We are generally prone to confine the course of nature entirely to physical causes, or to the influence which one body is ordained to have upon ano-

ther, according to certain immutable rules. But if the ever-active Deity hath not retired from his operations, something more must be understood. It is possible, that the permanency of physical powers may totally depend upon the permanency of his agency. Nor is it irrational to suppose, that in certain cases, where the usual course of things is not equal to the production of important events pre-ordained, this ever-active Being exerts an extraordinary energy, or a different kind of energy, according to certain moral laws of his own appointment. When God condescended to change the order of nature, or interrupt the usual influence of causes, in order to impress a conviction upon the minds of others, although it was by the infliction of judgments, the motive was always benevolent. Some essential good was to be produced, which could not otherways have existed. May not a similar motive induce him to a similar interference, although in a more secret, and perfectly imperceptible manner, in order to assist, support, and console those who, in conformity to his commands, repose their confidence in him, that their strength may be equal to their conflicts, and that in the hour of temptation and distress, they may not make ship-wreck of faith and a good conscience?

This subject has been briefly considered in some preliminary observations to a preceding Disquisition, to which the reader is referred.* It was there observed that our reason points out three modes by which the Divine Being may be supposed to execute his purpose.—By a stated concatenation of cause and effect, according to physical laws, destined to produce numberless beneficial effects, both in the natural and moral world; which may be equal to various purposes, both physical and moral, in the plans of his providence:—By an open and ostensible manifestation of extraordinary power, in order to impress a conviction upon the human mind, of some important facts, which human reason could not have discovered, or to alarm and terrify a sinful world;—and, thirdly, when these manifestations are not necessary or proper, may we not imagine that the Deity exerts a secret influence, by which a new and extensive series of operations may arise, which could not have existed according to the former tenour of things; and which, had the operations been made manifest, would have been deemed *miraculous?*

Many facts are upon record which evince that a conviction of this secret agency may be founded,

* See Theological Disq. Preliminary Observations.

either upon the *prediction* uttered, that certain events should take place, by the instrumentality of natural causes; or upon so remarkable a *coincidence* in their operations with the peculiar exigence of the case, as compels us to acknowledge the hand of God. Many of the plagues of Egypt illustrate the former position:—the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea; the destruction of their enemies by the return of the mighty waters; and the occasional supply of quails in the wilderness, illustrate the latter. The extreme violence of an eastern or a western wind, cannot appear to us as a deviation from the laws of nature; nor the sudden and impetuous change of these winds; yet their opportune influence, and the important purposes answered by this influence, induce every one who believe in the Mosaic history, to infer that there was a miraculous interference of Providence. But the Almighty is at all times free to employ a similar agency, without admitting us into his counsels; and without our being able to trace his footsteps. This secret agency seems to be the proper object, as it is the encouragement of prayer; and although the time, manner, and degree, are totally unknown, yet devout minds may safely rely upon the promise, that they shall not seek his face in vain.

The concealment is indubitably founded on wisdom. The laws of nature, or the operations of cause and effect, cannot be too intimately known. They are the foundation of all science, and a confidence in them is necessary to encourage and direct our pursuits. Miraculous displays of power have sometimes been employed, to convince an ignorant and unthinking world, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. But many evils would arise, were it distinctly known, in what cases, and to what a degree, the divine aids promised in the Gospel, were administered to each individual Christian. The *favoured* Mind would, in that instance, possess the infallibility of inspiration, which might inspire it with arrogance and pride, and induce it to neglect the ordinary means of improvement: while jealousy, envy, and despair, would torment those who were less favoured; and the free agency of man would be effectually destroyed.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it comes, and whither it goeth; so is every one, saith our Saviour, that is born of the Spirit." Whoever confidently maintains that, in any particular instance, he is influenced by the Spirit of God, should he not impose upon others, wretchedly deceives himself. For

a certain knowledge of the operation would render it *miraculous*. His feelings must be fallacious: for in this department of the divine government, all the operations of God are designedly and wisely *concealed* from human knowledge. By their *fruits* alone are such influences to be inferred. These fruits are not a presumptuous confidence, but "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

We have been led, by the importance of the subject, into a train of speculations, beyond our usual practice, although it is not irrelevant to the moral history of the human mind, which we are attempting to trace in its ethical and religious pursuits. Whether our principles, or any other, be received or rejected, every Christian will admit that the duty of prayer is explicitly enjoined. It has, in the exercise of it, a beneficial tendency; a blessing is pronounced upon the serious and conscientious discharge of it; and it is through this medium, that our heavenly father is training up his spiritual offspring, in the ways of peace and righteousness.

CHAPTER III.

On the future Inheritance of Sons.

An earthly Parent who possesses wisdom and foresight, does not imagine that he is fully discharging the office of a Father, by supplying the immediate wants of his son; or by expending the whole of his affection in the gratification of his desires. He provides for *futurity* also. He often restrains his own personal gratifications to œconomise a store for the future benefit of his offspring. If this be impracticable, he is solicitous to prepare his son, by a suitable education, for his own future exertions, that he may pass through life with comfort, respectability, and usefulness. In every case, the future Good of his children is always before his eyes; it is a constituent part of all his plans.

The gospel of Christ pre-eminently assures us that this is the grand object, perpetually before the eyes of our heavenly Father. The good things scattered over the whole world are, as it

were, the natural emanations from his all-bountiful providence; but these are trifling, compared with the blessings in reserve for the righteous, that is, for his obedient offspring. They now enjoy all the indulgences which it is consistent with his wisdom to admit; but they are perpetually reminded, that they are at present in a state of discipline: nay, that they are not at home; that they are travelling through all the scenes of this world for improvement. They are informed that the Futurity which awaits them, and for which they are educating, respects not the most permanent, the most honorable, or happy station in the present life, but their *existence in a future world.*

This is another characteristic excellence of Christianity. It has revealed to us a future state of existence. To those who do not believe in this Dispensation, a painful uncertainty remains; but, whoever acknowledges its Divine authority, considers this to be a most essential article of his faith. Whatever doubts there may be among Christians concerning other points, in this they are perfectly unanimous. They all agree that life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. The present life is now proved to be the mere dawn of existence; the commence-

ment of a state which shall have a permanent duration.

The Pagan world, in the times of their deepest ignorance, appeared to be very indifferent about a future state. Present pursuits, and present gratifications, seemed to occupy the whole of their attention. When individuals began to speculate, their notions were wild and absurd. At the most advanced periods of mental culture, those powers of intellect which improved the arts, and penetrated into the sciences, to a degree which astonishes and humbles the modern world, could not penetrate into the regions of futurity. The most elevated thoughts of the wisest philosophers, and strictest moralists, did not rise above a transient hope, a doubtful peradventure. When the inferior animals appeared to them more contented and happy than Man; in whom they perceived disorder, confusion, vice, and misery;—when these moralists discovered that there is something superlatively great in virtue, without its ensuring the correspondent recompense;—when they were compelled to acknowledge, that perfection was inscribed upon every part of nature, excepting that singular being *Man*,—the most refined, curious, and exalted being in the creation; they were astonished at a chasm, a hiatus in the arrangement of things;

which nothing could explain or remedy, but the expectancy of a future and a better state. But whether future realities would solve difficulties, or in what manner they would fill up this mighty void, and give an uniformity to the whole, they were anxiously ignorant. When they saw Death pass upon all men alike;—when they perceived that this monster entirely consumed the human frame, without respect of characters, and without a remaining vestige;—when they traced the various elements which compose the human fabric, in their assuming different arrangements, and forming different connections in the œconomy of nature, those expectations which the desire of protracted existence, powers of enjoyment, inequalities of lot, had excited, were either destroyed or rendered too languid to afford consolation.

Even to the *favoured* People the truths of a future state were not *revealed.* Pious Individuals might indulge a firmer hope than could be possessed by the most intelligent Heathens; for they were more intimately acquainted with the beneficent character of their God. But the full assurance of a future state of existence, was not a constituent part of their Dispensation. The Wise and Good will always hope; because they, and they alone, are able to

discern a natural connection between virtue and happiness: They perceive the possibility of enjoying permanent happiness, where there is a permanent love and practice of virtue; but they clearly perceive that this is not to be expected in the present imperfect state. It is, therefore, natural for them to look up to a better, under the government of that being whom they serve.

But the desire of "a state wherein dwelleth Righteousness," is too exalted and refined for common minds. This was an expectancy for which the Jewish Nation, at large, was not prepared. Their torpid intellects and depraved morals, were sufficiently indicated by their incessant preference of the grossest idolatry, to the worship of the true God. As their Minds were carnal, to adopt the expression of the apostle, they had carnal ordinances, and we may add carnal hopes set before them. As minds like theirs could only be influenced by sensible objects, these were alone employed, by the supreme Lawgiver, as motives to obedience; and to give sensible objects all their force, they had the most absolute promise of national prosperity on the one hand, and threats of national distress on the other, according to the state of their moral character and conduct.

That fulness of time which was favourable

to the mission of Jesus, was also favourable to the promulgation of the important truth, that human beings are destined to survive the grave, and exist in a future, though unknown world.

Although a future State of existence is thus revealed, and received as an indubitable truth, by every one who professes Christianity; yet we still remain in great obscurity, concerning many circumstances, into which interested and anxious curiosity seeks to penetrate, in vain. But this concealment is as wise as it is intentional. Seldom would it be prudent for the most affluent parent on earth, to expatiate upon the future wealth of his children, in their presence; or to indulge their fancies with enlarging upon the varied enjoyments which such riches will procure. This, during the period of their pupilage, would be to foster discontent; and to make all the intermediate means of enjoyment appear to be frivolous and insipid. Thus does the wisdom of the Most High exercise the faith of his dependent creatures, in a manner calculated to encourage diligence, without too much detaching their minds from a world, in which they are destined to work out their salvation, by a conscientious discharge of its vari-

ous duties. Were a circumstantial detail of future blessings to be presented to the imagination, to the extent which curiosity might require, the human mind might be rendered unfit for the present state of things; and the humble faith, and pious hope, which are so acceptable to God, might give way to unseasonable ecstasies, or to a painful and culpable impatience.

We are, however, able to collect the following particulars, from the different representations given of a future state, in the sacred writings.

That state is always held forth to the righteous as a *Promise.* It is the promise of some great and lasting *good;* a good that will be adapted to the improved nature of man; and with which no sublunary good is worthy to be compared.

As the Gospel is professedly a Dispensation of Grace; as it perpetually offers pardon and reconciliation; as in every page, it addresses itself to the best feelings of the heart, it is continually expatiating upon the *Blessedness* of the future world, although in very indefinite terms. The lot of the irreclaimable children of their heavenly father, and the punishment to be inflicted upon them, are occasionally and reluctantly mentioned, by way of salutary admonition. These are not treated as the principal parts of their ministry, either by Christ or his Apostles. It is

observable, that whatever relates to the future destiny of the Wicked, is much more obscurely expressed. It may be considered as an awful and alarming threat, and not as an explicit revelation. As we are now examining the characteristic excellencies of Christianity, in its display of the divine *Benignity*, we shall not intermix with it the particulars of so gloomy a subject, but reserve them for a distinct Enquiry.

The following circumstances are revealed to us respecting a Future State, which is promised as a Blessing.

1. It is denominated *Life*. "If thou wilt *enter into life*," says our Saviour to the Lawyer, "keep the Commandments." "They that believe not in the Son *shall not see life*." "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will," and "because I *live* ye shall live also." "Verily verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath *everlasting life*, and shall not come into condemnation, but *is passed from death unto life*. Verily verily I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear *shall live*," *&c.**

* See John v. 20. passim.

Jesus complains, "Ye will not come unto me that you may *have life*;" and he terms himself the "*bread of life*." All the Apostles have likewise adopted the same language. "If by one man's offence, death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of Grace, and of the gift of righteousness, *shall reign in life* by one, Jesus Christ."* "We that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened; not for that we shall be unclothed but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up *of life*."†

"He that hath the Son *hath life*," says the Apostle John, "and he that hath not the Son *hath not life*."

The idea universally entertained of Life is, that it is a state of conscious existence; a state in which all susceptible beings are rendered capable of sensation and perception, and of receiving impressions from surrounding objects. Rational and moral agents are made capable of thinking, examining, reflecting, and of acting, according to certain principles, in the discharge of various offices, and in the pursuit of various objects. We expect to lose these powers by death. The bodily frame is totally decomposed; and it can no longer serve as an instrument for the vital

* Rom. v. 17. † 2 Cor. v. 4.

Principle. All sublunary connections and sublunary concerns, are annihilated for ever. Nor can any satisfactory conceptions be formed concerning that energetic Principle, respecting its state of existence, or mode of existence; much less concerning any state of consciousness, or powers of activity, without correspondent organs. This is the Death which hath passed, and will pass upon the human race; and the Life promised in the Gospel, in opposition to death, must signify the restoration to conscious existence. Those to whom this promise was first made, and all their successors, who have not placed a greater confidence in their own speculations concerning the nature of the soul, than in the revelation of God, have never been able to understand the above and similar expressions, in any other sense. This, and this alone, corresponds with another particular revealed, concerning a future state,

It is observable that the Scriptures never direct the imaginations of the pious to a world of Spirits, existing independent of the corporeal frame dissolved in death; but they incessantly speak of a *resurrection from the Grave.* "I am the *resurrection* and the life, and he that believeth in me, though he were *dead*, yet

shall he live."* "They shall *come forth*, they that have done good to the *resurrection* of life."† "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind; and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be blessed at the *resurrection of the just*."‡ The Apostles preached through Jesus the *resurrection from the dead*. "How say some among you that there is no *resurrection of the dead?* If there be no *resurrection from the dead*, then is Christ not risen," &c.§ "They that are in the *Graves* shall hear his voice. This *corruptible*, must put on incorruption, this *mortal*, put on immortality.—*Death* is swallowed up in victory. Oh, *Death*, where is thy sting! Oh, *Grave*, where is thy victory!" &c. &c.

The above quotations are but a small selection from passages of a similar import; nor should they have been so numerous were it not to evince, that a resurrection to life is a constituent part of the Christian Scheme; and, consequently, it is not mentioned in a slight and cursory manner. The doctrine is incessantly inculcated, in varied phrases; and this is the case with every other doctrine which the primitive teachers of Christianity knew to be of the first importance. Occasional expres-

* John xi. 25. † Ibid. v. 29. ‡ Luke xiv. 13.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 12.

sions relate merely to incidental circumstances; and their particular meaning is to be explained by them. Reiterated assertions, as explicit as the common use of language can make them, must finally prove an effectual barrier against the hypothetic notions which oppose them.

The promise, therefore, is, that the Righteous *shall be restored to life.* The language of the Old Testament represents them as *gathered to their fathers.* The language of the New Testament, that they *sleep in Jesus;* that he is the first fruits of them that *sleep;* and them that *sleep* in Jesus, will God bring with him.

Life is universally deemed a desirable good. All animated beings shun death with horror. It is a Blessing, as being the essential pre-requisite of every blessing to be enjoyed, or to be wished. While the perception of a single blessing remains, no one can be totally disgusted with life.

3. But the future life of the Pious will not be, like the present, transient and uncertain, bounded, in its utmost extent, to a contracted number of years, and held upon the uncertain tenure of an hour, in the intermediate space. It will be *everlasting life.* "He that believeth on the Son hath *everlasting* life." "The righteous shall go into life *everlasting.*" "The gift

of God is *eternal* life through Jesus Christ our Lord." But as the word translated *eternal* and *everlasting*, does not always signify an unlimited period, various other expressions are used which have no ambiguity; not only life, but *immortality*, are brought to light by the Gospel. "This corruptible shall put on *incorruption*. This mortal shall put on *immortality*." Neither *can they die any* more. "They *will ever be with* the Lord." They will be as immortal as their master.

4. Again, the future world will be a state of *moral excellence*. It is always represented as a kingdom wherein dwelleth *Righteousness*; in which nothing that *defileth* shall enter. Its inhabitants have the title of *Saints*. They are holy; they are sanctified; not from any particular professions of religion, or of superior sanctity; not from scrupulous attentions to certain rites and ordinances, or assumed austerity of manners; but from their inward love of goodness; having kept themselves *unspotted from the world*. It is the *pure in heart* who shall see God. "Being made *free from sin*, and become servants of God, they have their fruits unto *holiness*, and the end everlasting life." No one act of disobedience, to their heavenly Father, will be committed; no disorderly pas-

sions or ill-placed affections, no secret desires, inconsistent with the welfare of the blessed community, will be indulged. Those sources of vice, folly, and misery, *ignorance, influence of sensible objects,* and *inordinate self-love,* will no longer exist. The path of duty will be unerringly obvious; surrounding objects will always incline and encourage to the practice of duty; and every individual inhabitant, will not only be acquainted with the minutest ramifications of justice, but he will be disposed to obey their dictates. For every one will love his neighbour as himself; and benevolence will be continually operating, with the earnest activity of self-love. Hence there will not be a contrariety of interests; creating rivalships, and fomenting animosities. The only rivalships, of which we can form any worthy conceptions, must consist in a generous emulation to excel in goodness.

It is to produce dispositions and qualifications like these, that our heavenly Father has placed us in a previous state of discipline. We are here destined to suffer all the evils engendered by vicious irregularities, until our own experience shall correct our mistakes, and improve our nature. It is for this purpose that perfect precepts and a perfect example are placed before us; that every paternal encouragement, and paternal admonition, are employed.

It is to rectify the disorders of the mind, that we are destined to suffer various afflictions. In a word, it is for this that we are commanded to mortify the deeds of the body, and tocultivate the fruits of the spirit; for this that we are fortified with the promise of Divine assistance in our arduous endeavours.

Those to whom the study of Ethics is in the least interesting, will perceive that a requisition to follow after holiness, has nothing arbitrary in its nature. It is necessary in order to render eternal existence an eternal blessing. Existence itself, is not a more essential requisite to the enjoyment of any good, than the love of virtue and piety, are essential to the supreme good. It will not be necessary to enlarge upon this subject, in the present connection. It has been anticipated in our minute examination of the nature and consequences of Virtue and Vice. In these sublunary regions the prevalency of virtue would indubitably render human beings happy. Were every man to make the trial, no disputes would be agitated, whether virtue be its own reward; for no insulated Individual would then be compelled to sustain the shocks and insults of surrounding vice, until he should doubt the truth of the proposition. Every man would contribute his share to the public

weal, and every man would enjoy the most ample returns. This must be the state of the blessed. Universal goodness will be productive of universal order, peace, harmony, satisfaction, and joy. Their temptations, their trials, their conflicts are at an end. Nor will their tranquillity be disturbed by one disorderly subject.

In those regions the principle of *Love*, that cardinal principle which prompts every desire, and directs every pursuit, whether it be legitimate or not, will be eternally operating for universal good. Every affection will be properly excited, respecting its object and degrees of attachment. There will be no contest between reason and inclination. Enlightened reason will fully approve of, and strongly recommend every enjoyment. Every thing surrounding the blessed inhabitants will deserve their attention, and call forth the correspondent affections of esteem, veneration, love, gratitude, and admiration. The divine affection of *Love* will be without alloy, without rivalship, without disappointment. Benevolence will be in perpetual exercise; always wise in its designs, always rejoicing in its successes, always sincere and ardent in its congratulations.

"Blessed are the pure in heart *for they shall*

see God." They shall know, by constant experience, *that God is love.* The period of their discipline is past, and with it the afflictive chastisements, which for a time obscured, in their gloomy minds, the manifestations of the Divine benignity. They now enjoy the light of his countenance without a cloud.

Their Saviour had said, when he was upon the earth, " Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." They will see the accomplishment of this desire. They will rejoice in him who, through many sufferings and much disgrace, became the triumphant captain of their salvation. They will participate in his possession of that joy, which, by being set before him, in prospect, enabled him to endure the cross, despising the shame; which gave him a title to sit down at the right hand of the throne of God; and with hearts overflowing with gratitude, they will join the grand chorus, " Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!"

5. The blessedness of the righteous is fre-

quently represented in the sacred writings, as being the result of *Knowledge.* It is said of the wicked, that they *know not God:* it is characteristic of the righteous that they *know the Lord.* St. Paul congratulates the Corinthians that they are enriched in *all knowledge.* Light and knowledge are frequently synonymous in the language of Scripture. Because the Son of God came to reveal the will of his Father, he calls himself the *light of the world.* "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the *light of the knowledge* of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ;" and the Apostle prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give unto the Ephesians "the spirit of *wisdom* and revelation, in the *knowledge* of him; that, the *eyes of their understanding being enlightened,* they may *know* what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints." In his anticipation of the future state, he saith, "Now we know, in part; when that which is perfect shall come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I *know,* even also as I am known."

We have observed, upon a former occasion, that the love of knowledge is natural to the mind; the pursuit of knowledge is of itself a pleasing occupation. Where *utility* is not the object, and where no attention is paid to the great source of knowledge; where his existence may be denied, still there is a gratification in the exercise of the intellectual powers, and in enriching the mind with treasures, by which it enjoys an elevation unknown to the mere sensualist. But what is comprised in the *knowledge of God* no one can tell. Thus far we know, that a devout Theist, in this world, contemplates the works of nature with an advantage which no Atheist can appreciate; for he hath a delight in tracing the footsteps of *Wisdom* and *Design* in all his researches. Every truth discovered, every operation rescued from ignorance and darkness, being ascribed to an *intelligent cause*, becomes a gem of infinite value; and it fills his soul, not with vague embarrassed Wonder, but with the pleasing sensations of devout Surprise and Admiration.

In those regions of light, no painful obscurities shall remain. Those who are worthy of becoming partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, shall *know as they are known.* All the difficulties and embarrassments that confounded and tormented them, in their sublunary

state, shall at once be dissolved; they shall be dissipated like the chilling mists before the meridian sun. The scenes surrounding them shall amply display the glories of their God: and their occupation, during the endless concatenation of ages, shall consist in the employment of their intellectual powers, in new discoveries, developing the wisdom of his plans, and the evidences of his unbounded Benignity. These will incessantly cherish those pleasing affections, Love, Joy, Gratitude, and Admiration. Nor will their complete felicity ever extinguish *Hope.* Whatever they may possess, they will be authorized to *hope* for more; and their hopes will be unalloyed by the fear of disappointments.

These are the leading characteristics of the blessings of a future State, in reserve for the righteous, as revealed to us in the gospel; and to this revelation we shall confine our attention. Were we to indulge in speculation, and in reasoning from analogy, we might draw many pleasing inferences with safety. We might argue that, as in this state of things, which is confessedly a school of discipline, the sources of our present well-being and enjoyments are so numerous and so various, an infinitely greater variety, and to an infinitely greater extent, may rationally be expected from an indulgent parent, when he

shall be perfectly well pleased with his offspring. We might argue, that as in this state of imperfect knowledge, the mind is furnished with bodily organs, and instruments capable of executing such important purposes; as these are of so much utility to the accommodation of our present life; as they are such wonderful sources of intellectual improvements, in every useful art and science, we might argue, that the instruments provided for the immortal principle, will certainly be accommodated to a state of perfection, and to a world of light and knowledge. The sublime apostle informs us, that "there are *celestial* bodies, and bodies *terrestrial*, that the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." So also "the resurrection of the dead: it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." As it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, they never can be known until they shall be enjoyed.

The primitive preachers of Christianity, describing the state of the Blessed, frequently make allusions to subjects which are most pleasing and acceptable to men. The kingdom of heaven

is compared to a *pearl* of great price. We are commanded to lay up for ourselves *treasures* in heaven. Those who excel in virtue and goodness, are compared to the faithful servants, who improved the talents committed to their charge, and who were rewarded by being *rulers over many things.* "When the chief shepherd shall appear," says St. Peter, "ye shall *receive a crown of glory*, that fadeth not away. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more *exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*" These, and similar expressions, are sources of encouragement, although they are indefinite in their application. Some of them clearly intimate that there will be distinctions of rank and honour, among the Blessed themselves; while others as clearly indicate that Glory, Honour, and Immortality, will be the portion of all those who shall be admitted into the heavenly regions.

Such are the representations given us of a future world. It is described as a state of perfect Felicity. To this, and to this alone, are the terms *Bliss* and *Beatitude* applied. Nothing on earth is deemed worthy of the epithet; such is the portion which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through him the God and Father of us all, hath prepared for the

righteous. Which leads us to another characteristic given of this happy state.

6. This provision of happiness for immortal beings is never considered as the *reward of merit*, abstractedly considered; nor as the recompense of an *hireling*, for services performed, by which the master is himself benefited. It is always placed in the light of *an Inheritance*. The righteous are said to be *Heirs* of God.

St. Paul, in addressing the christian converts at Rome, thus expresses himself: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of *adoption*, whereby we cry, Abba, father; and, if children, then *Heirs*, *Heirs* of God, and *joint Heirs* with our Lord Jesus Christ." When St. Paul received his commission to preach to the Gentiles, it was "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an *inheritance* among them that are sanctified through faith." "Thou art no more a *servant* but a *son*, and if a son, then an *Heir* of God, through Christ." "Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again

unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an *inheritance* incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

In this respect also is the paternal character strictly maintained. Industrious Man does not lay up a future provision for his offspring, by way of *recompense* for the important services they may have rendered him through life. He considers their obedient conduct as a favourable presage of their future well being, and not as the *purchase* of any provision for them, which he is able to make. The Son is always considered as the *natural heir*. Should he not succeed to his father's property, an alienation takes place, in consequence of some specific deed, and it is to be ascribed to some peculiar cause. This is universally considered as the law of nature. It is consonant to reason, that parents, who are the sources of existence, and who have brought into being an inhabitant of the world, without any volition of his own, should make some suitable provision for him, or enable him to pass through life in such a manner that existence may be deemed a blessing. To abandon him, would be censured as unnatural, unjust, and cruel. This is the law of nature and of reason, and strong parental affections are implanted in the human

breast, as a guarantee that the law shall be inviolably maintained. The obstinate *disobedience* of the offspring, their total inattention to instruction and reproof, and their being absolutely irreclaimable, rendering themselves unfit for the enjoyment of their patrimony, as well as unworthy of it, alone can annul this obligation; and with a good parent it will always be annulled, with a reluctant and desponding heart. Thus will the Son have a natural right to a Paternal inheritance, without any characteristic merit; but the title may possibly be forfeited by his *demerit*.

Again, although his enjoyment of a patrimony may greatly depend upon his own qualifications, and the uses to which it may be applied, yet it is self-evident, that, notwithstanding the excellency of his character, he cannot possibly inherit from his parent, more than it is in the parent's power to bequeath. From the cottage to a kingdom, the difference will not depend upon the comparative merits of the possessors, but upon the comparative fortunes of their parents. The rich treasures of the heavenly state, will, in like manner, be great and inexhaustible, because their heavenly father is an immortal Being of inexhaustible munificence.

7. But although the Gospel dispensation hath placed the blessings of eternal life, in the light of an *inheritance*, yet it always represents these blessings as a *Gift*, as an *unmerited Boon*, as *an extraordinary act of Grace*, in a manner that is unusual in the relative characters of parent and son. It is said, that the *wages* of sin is death, but the *gift* of God is eternal life. By *grace* are ye saved through faith. The children of God are no longer considered as natural heirs, but as heirs of *grace*. We are *made heirs* according to the hope of eternal life, being justified by his *grace*," &c.

This peculiarity, so different from what has ever been observed among human parents, is to be explained by adverting to the sinful characters of the children of God; to their universal rebellion and apostasy, which have cut them off from the rights of inheritance, and by which they have forfeited a filial claim to life and immortality. The invariable law is, the *soul that sinneth, it shall die; the wages of sin is* DEATH; the transgressors shall be *destroyed*. Life was promised to Adam upon condition of his perfect obedience to the Divine commands; he transgressed, lost his title, and became subject to *death*. The whole human race are represented, in the gospel which bringeth salvation, as being

guilty before God, and in a state of absolute *condemnation.* The great blessings announced, under the Christian dispensation, are, pardon to penitents, and the remission of sins; in consequence of which they are saved from this state of condemnation, and are again considered as the Sons of God. But it is by an act of special grace and favour; it is no longer their *birthright*; it is communicated in the spirit of *adoption.* "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," saith the Apostle Peter, "who, according to his abundant mercy, hath *begotten us again* unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." "When the fulness of time was come," says St. Paul, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might receive the *adoption of sons.*" "Having predestinated us unto the *adoption of children* by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." It is, therefore, in consequence of this *spirit of adoption,* that we are the children of God; "if children, then heirs, and joint heirs with Christ."

Whoever reads, with any degree of attention, these, and numerous other passages which might have been adduced, will immediately perceive the distinction carefully and strongly marked, which runs through the whole, between the Recipients of these blessings, and Jesus, the Intermediate. He is never represented as a *Partaker*, but as a *Dispenser* of the grace of God to mankind. Every gift which pertains to eternal life, is assiduously ascribed to him, as the procuring cause. God is *our* father, because he is *his* father; because *he* lives, *we* shall live also. If *we* rise from the dead, it is because *he* rose from the dead, and became the first fruits of them that sleep. If *we* receive the adoption of children, the Apostle blesses "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to this lively hope by *his* resurrection from the dead." We are told, that "as the father hath life in himself, so hath he *given to the Son to have life in himself*." "Therefore doth my Father love me," says Jesus, "because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but *I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*"

These singularities can only be ascribed to the *perfection of his moral character*, by which

continues to be the natural heir of life and immortality. He never offended his heavenly Father in a single instance. He was his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. He could not, therefore, be brought under the *condemnation of death.* When he became obedient unto death, it was a *voluntary* act. It was not because he had forfeited his claim to life, but in *obedience to the will of his heavenly Father.* This voluntary sacrifice to the will of God, and for the good of mankind, entitled him to still greater honours than those which will belong to his fellow immortals. "Him hath God raised from the dead, and exalted with his right hand, to be a *Prince* and a *Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.*"

8. Although this inheritance of eternal life, cannot be possessed by offending creatures, according to the natural claims of a filial character; although it is the liberal gift of a much offended, but reconciled Parent; and although it will be equally enjoyed by all who sincerely return to their filial allegiance, yet we are assured that a state of Blessedness admits, and may require, various degrees in station and happiness; as, in the present state of society, the good

of the whole is promoted by a diversity of ranks. The author and finisher of our faith tells his disciples, " In my Father's house are many mansions, and I go and prepare a place for you." Which expressions authorize the supposition that there are distinctions and gradations of felicity, in the heavenly Regions. The beatitudes pronounced by our Saviour mark a distinction of characters, and a distinction of rewards. Of the *meek* it is said, that they shall *inherit the earth;* of the *merciful*, that they shall *obtain mercy;* of the *pure in heart*, that they *shall see God; peace-makers* shall be called the *children of God;* those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, falsely accused and reviled for their adherence to the truth as it is in Jesus, are exhorted to *rejoice* and be *exceeding glad*, for *great* will be their reward in heaven. " There is one glory of the sun, says St. Paul, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differs from another in glory; so also is the resurrection of the just." These gradations will also be proportionate to the different degrees of *moral excellence* in the Righteous. We are assured, that " every man shall receive according to his own works." " He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; he that soweth plentifully, shall reap plentifully."

The faithful servant who had improved the five talents committed to his trust, is described as being made a ruler over five cities: he who improved his ten talents, was advanced to higher honours. Of the seed that was sown in good ground, according to another parable of our Saviour, there was a great diversity in the produce. Some brought forth thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold; and as every man will receive according to the fruits of his own labour, the diversities, and the recompence, will be proportionably great. Hence it is that we are counselled to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Which signifies, not merely to secure an entrance into the heavenly regions, but that an accumulation of good may be obtained, by those who are abounding in the work of the Lord. This statement of the laws of distributive justice is given us, by him who is our lawgiver and judge. Such minute and benevolent attention will be paid to the humblest efforts to do good, "that a cup of cold water given to a disciple, from a proper motive, shall not lose its reward." The great benefit ascribed to afflictions, consists in their "working out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The animating inference which the Apostle Peter draws from this doctrine is, "therefore, my brethren, since we look

for such things, what manner of persons ought we not to be, in all holy conversation and godliness !"

The wisdom and equity of this constitution of things are most evident. It harmonizes perfectly with those conceptions universally formed of the nature of *comparative* merit. We instinctively, as it were, proportionate the degrees of our approbation to the obvious degrees of moral excellence; and our judgment invariably pronounces that it is *entitled* to a correspondent recompence. The Universal Lawgiver, who is good, and doeth good continually, commands us to love and practise virtue; because the love and practice of virtue are essential to the improvement of the moral nature of each individual; because they are the means which he has appointed for the production of universal good. Every successful act of virtue is efficient of Good. It communicates some portion of Happiness, and must be acceptable to him who wills the happiness of all men: but nothing can be acceptable to God, which shall not meet with its reward. It is in the power of the Almighty to communicate pleasurable sensations to every Individual; but these sensations would be instinctive, circumscribed, and void of mental approbation; therefore has his wisdom and his

benevolence, constituted the voluntary Agency of his intelligent creatures, as the medium of enjoymentandof communication. Moral Agents are his instruments. They have the high honour of being denominated *fellow workers* with God; and he has decreed, that they shall be happy according to the wise controul over their passions and affections, and according to their benevolent exertions in the promotion of happiness. The felicity of all social Beings depends upon reciprocal affections. Reciprocal affections cannot be nourished without indications of good will. Such indications consist in reiterated acts of benevolence. These constitute the bonds, the delectable bonds of union. They render felicity one common stock, as it were, one undivided property, to which all are contributors, and of which all are participants.

We may further observe, that an augmentation of enjoyment will naturally arise from a progressive improvement, in every thing that is deemed an excellence; and particularly in *moral* excellency. All enjoyments, above sensual gratifications, are seated in the Mind. They must be derived from *mental perceptions*; and according to the nature and multiplicity of these perceptions, may enjoyments be augmented. Ignorant minds have few ideas, few perceptions, few

enjoyments. He that loves and pursues valuable knowledge, is perpetually augmenting the number of his ideas, and of the pleasing impressions made by them. He that is distinguished for his personal virtues, will inevitably be distinguished also, in a climate favourable to virtue, by an exemption from all the evils of personal vice and irregular deportment. He will enjoy all the consolations of security, contentment, self approbation. He that loves his fellow creatures, enjoys a pleasure from the affection itself. He that does good to his fellow creatures, enjoys a sensation still more pleasing. By the reiteration of good, is there a reiteration of enjoyment, arising from the augmentation of good, from inward satisfaction of mind, from the love and gratitude of those immediately benefited, from the esteem of the Worthy, and from the approbation of his God, and of his Saviour. "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant,*" will be the honourable encomium: "*Enter ye into the joy of your Lord,*" will be the joyful recompense. How pertinent is the exhortation of the apostle, in this connection; "Since we look for such things, what manner of persons ought we not to be, in all holy conversation and godliness! Therefore, my brethren, be ye always abounding that your labour will not be in vain in the Lord."

The above reflections on the nature of future happiness, as it is revealed to us in the scriptures of truth, confirm and illustrate, in a satisfactory manner, the distinctions which we had formerly made, relative to the gradations of merit observable in moral agency; the *absolute*, *conditional*, and *comparative*.

Absolute merit belongs not to the sinful children of God. Even the future, however exemplary, cannot recal the past. Life and immortality are the rewards of *moral perfection* only; and the title of *Right* is lost by a single act of disobedience. Among those who are clothed with humanity, the claim belongs to the immaculate Son of God alone. He knew no sin, and with him the Father was always well pleased. In him the merit is *absolute*.

Conditional merit consists in our complying with the terms of salvation proposed. Although a compliance be simply an act of prudence, and can lay no claim to any other kind of merit; although the reward is so infinitely superior to the nature and effects of the acts itself, yet the man who conforms to the injunction, is entitled, by virtue of the promise, to the reward proposed. The terms are, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" receive a dispensation which proclaims pardon to the penitent, and assures those who return to

filial obedience, that they shall be entitled to all the privileges of children, by being adopted into the family of heaven. Compliance with such terms is simply an act of discretion; to reject them is the extreme of folly, and it indicates the absolute dominion of vice.

On *comparative* merit is founded the wise determination, to reward every man according to his *comparative deserts.* By it we perceive the justice of the decree, that "whoever sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that sows plentifully, shall reap plentifully."

The importance of these distinctions is manifest, from the gross abuses committed, by mistakes concerning the nature of merit, and demerit. Some have been so extravagant as to conceive that particular actions, which have generally been of their own devising, are of a nature so *meritorious,* that they will be received as *substitutes* for the moral virtues; that they contain *intrinsic* merit, sufficient to compensate for every defect or imperfection; without reflecting that a continuance in vice must become a disqualification for a state of purity and perfection; and without considering, that there is more absolute demerit in a single vice, in one act of disobedience to such a Parent, than there can be of merit in the most splendid virtues.

Others again have run into the opposite extreme. In the confusion of their minds, they have declaimed against the *merit of good works*, with such indiscriminate vehemence as to discourage the practice. They pray earnestly for *Holiness*, but inveigh against *Virtue* and *Morality*; without considering that Holiness can be no other than the practice of virtue from *religious motives*; and no man can *practise holiness without understanding the nature of virtue, and the extent of its ramifications.*

CHAP. IV.

On the filial Confidence of a Christian; or the Nature of FAITH.

WE see in what manner, and to what an extent, the Divine Being displays his relative character, to his moral and intelligent offspring. He has graciously assumed the character of a *Father;* and he is conducting himself towards us like a wise and affectionate Parent, who, in every respect, consults the true interest of those to whom he has communicated the gift of life; and who are necessarily dependent upon him. He not only supplies their immediate exigencies, but superintends their education, and promotes their improvement, in all those qualifications, upon which he knows their future welfare will depend. He indulges no partial fondness, which excludes correction; but he frequently manifests his love by his chastisements. He provides for them a future inheri-

tance; and he prepares them for the enjoyment of it.

When the whole tenour of conduct in a Parent, fully indicates the Wisdom and Benevolence of his character, the two great duties of punctual Obedience to his injunctions, and implicit Confidence in his superintendence and direction, are indispensably required from his offspring. *Disobedience* is *rebellion* against legitimate authority. It is a rebellion fomented by perverseness of temper, and ungovernable passions. The *want of Confidence* in such a parent, is the union of ignorance, vanity, and ingratitude. It opposes crude conceits to mature discernment; inexperience to experience; and the most consummate ignorance, to extensive knowledge. It is impossible for Minors to comprehend the plans of their intelligent Sire; to judge of the propriety of all the means he may have adopted; or to devise the issue. Nor could the Sire lose his title to wisdom and discretion more effectually, than by complying with their desires, and acting conformably to their opinions. The application is obvious; but the evidences of impropriety and folly, in disobeying the commands of Heaven, increase propor-

tionably to the distance between the wisdom of the Most High, and that of the imperfect children of men.

The obedient and acquiescent state of mind, to the commands, and the decrees of Heaven is, in the language of Scripture, denominated *Faith.* It is a disposition which is peremptorily required in almost every page. Christians are said *to live by faith.*—We are justified by *faith.*—Without *faith* it is impossible to please God.—We are exhorted to hold fast the profession of our *faith.*—Jesus is termed the *author* and finisher *of our faith.* The term is incessantly repeated in the New Testament, because its import is of infinite importance. It consequently demands minute examination.

If we enquire into the nature of Faith, we shall find that it contains the following characteristics.

1. Faith implies a firm belief in the *existence* and *agency* of some intelligent Being, who is the object of it. By this it is distinguished from the simple belief of a *fact.* The term is never applied to our belief in the Existence of inanimate bodies, or of any particular species of Animal. We believe in the existence of several

planets; and many believe that they are inhabited, but it would be improper to say that we *have faith* in their existence. We may alone apply the term to our confidence in the opinion or authority of one, whom we suppose to be competent to know the facts. Nor, in any other mode, do we express our belief in the existence of any particular species of animal, which we have not seen. We believe that it exists, because we *have faith* in the knowledge and veracity of the narrator. Concerning the facts themselves we may at first entertain vague and confused *ideas* or *notions*; these may ripen into firmer *opinions*, and may finally become constituent parts of our *knowledge*; but they are not the subjects of our *faith*.

2. Faith implies a certain degree of *Confidence* in the character and conduct of this Agent. We suppose that he can be trusted. We rely upon his capacity, honour, integrity, veracity; and if we have expectations from him, we depend upon his *good dispositions* towards us. From a knowledge of his good qualities, we entertain *hopes* that he will befriend us, and if he has *promised*, we rely upon his veracity, for the performance. These peculiarities seem to constitute the germ of the word *faith*, if we may so speak. All its derivatives, *faithful*,

faithfulness, *fidelity*, express character and conduct deserving of *confidence*. In this respect it is parallel with the Latin word *fides*, and the Greek πίστος; which, in all their ramifications, retain the idea of a *trust* and *confidence* reposed, or of a *character* and *conduct* deserving of confidence.

3. The term *Faith* has always a respect to some *Good*, possible, probable, in expectation, or promised. This is invariably implied, when we repose our trust and confidence in any one. Hence its close affinity with *Hope*. The expectation of an Injury from another, is never said to inspire a *confidence* that it will be inflicted. Such an expectation inspires *dread;* and if we trust in any thing it is in some means of escaping.

These characteristics manifestly discriminate faith from *Belief*, abstractedly considered. We *believe* in an infinitude of truths, with which we have no immediate concern; from which we expect not to derive benefit; and which inspire no confidence. It is still more remote from *notions*, *opinions*, *conjectures*, which may be true, or may be false. But it is nearly connected with the word *sentiment*, as explained in a preceding disquisition. This, we observe, relates to *moral character*. It is because we entertain worthy Sentiments of the object, that we have

faith and *confidence* in him ; and we rely upon his favourable *sentiments* respecting us.

4. The *Character* being once established in our opinion, we are not only encouraged, but we are compelled by reason, to entertain a *confidence*, in some cases where appearance may be very unfavourable ; contrary to the usual tenour of our sentiments and our expectations. This disposition is an honourable and acceptable testimony of a trust, in the worthy object of our faith. His character is so firmly established in our hearts, that incidental circumstances, of a contrary aspect, will not suggest unfavourable suspicions. We shall be disposed to ascribe his non-compliance with our desires to any cause, rather than to negligence, or to the want of disposition : and we shall be more disposed to suspect our own ignorance, than his good will towards us.

5. Rational faith always supposes that the confidence and hopes which it inspires hath a *solid foundation.* It implies that we are in possession of some satisfactory *proofs* that the object of our faith, is both disposed and able to befriend us : that he is not deficient either in power, wisdom, or benignity. If we believe without any proofs that these exist, we may *presume*, but we have no right to repose a *con-*

fidence. A confidence thus placed, may be an act of temerity, of weak credulity; a phantom of the imagination, and a dangerous error; but not a legitimate act of Faith.

These are the principles admitted in the intercourse of man with man; and they perfectly correspond with the description of that faith which is required of us in the revelation of God. "Faith," says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, "is the ground, the basis of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." "He that cometh to God must believe that he *is*, and that he is the *rewarder* of them that diligently seek him."* All the illustrations adduced from the conduct of Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, &c. &c. manifest a strong belief in the existence and providence of God; a confidence reposed in his wisdom, power, and goodness, and in a faithfulness to his promises, which influenced them to a cheerful compliance with his injunctions; notwithstanding, in many of the instances stated, appearances were so unfavourahle to the desired issue.

* See Heb. xi. passim.

The above statement of the nature and characteristics of faith, will immediately discover to us the reason, why it is so forcibly enjoined in the Gospel Dispensation. To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is not an arbitrary requisition. It is not intended merely as a complimentary honour to the Saviour of the world, without any farther object; but it is, in its own nature, a pre-requisite to the enjoyment, and the diffusion of the *Blessings* of the Gospel.

It has been remarked, that a discreet Son will always entertain a filial confidence in the dispositions and conduct of his worthy Parents. This is not only reasonable in itself, but it *flows spontaneously* from the connection, if no impediment presents itself to the performance of this duty. His parents are always *before* him. He enjoys blessings and advantages every day and every hour, which he *knows* cannot be derived from any other source. Thus it would be almost superfluous to say that a son has faith in the wisdom and kindness of his father. He has ocular demonstration of his parental attentions. But the great Parent is *invisible.* Surrounding objects have a tendency to exclude *him* from our thoughts. We perceive the immediate operation of natural causes, in the various events of our lives; and upon these

the imagination is prone to rest, as if they were the sole agents. The evidences of his Existence are not obvious to our senses. They are to be obtained alone by consideration and reflection. They are the results of an inference, which demands the exercise of the reason and judgment. The knowledge of the Perfections and Agency of God, and of his intimate Relation to all the creatures of his power, is derived from the same source; and it equally demands the exercise of the understanding, to inspire conviction, and render them the objects of our belief. Thus, although a firm belief in such a character must inspire a confidential hope, yet it demands a certain process before it can be obtained. As a pre-requisite to coming to God with a filial confidence, we must *believe* that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him. This, both in the language of reason and of Scripture, is an act of faith.

In like manner, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, must be a necessary pre-requisite for receiving all the blessings of Christianity. In the ancient world, those who believed not in him, continued Jews or Gentiles. They were in a state of Nature, which is always opposed to a state of Grace. They were yet in their sins; and consequently they continued in the

character of the children of wrath, instead of being the children of the covenant, or of adoption.* "But to as many as believe in him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name."

They who believe not in the divinity of his mission, believe not in his authority to proclaim the forgiveness of sins. Nor will they acknowledge themselves to be under an obligation to obey his precepts, or to imitate his example. They that believe not in his having been unjustly crucified, must believe him to have been a criminal or an impostor. A belief in his death was a pre-requisite to a belief in his resurrection from the dead; upon which every future hope depends. For as the apostle argues with the Corinthians, "if Christ be not risen, then is your faith vain, and ye are yet in your sins."

Thus we see a Belief in the divine mission of Christ, that he was pre-eminently the Son of God; that he had power from above to proclaim pardon and reconciliation, is essentially necessary to the formation of the Christian character. It is necessary to inspire a confidence in God, that he has assumed the encouraging title of a re-

* See Note D.

conciled Parent, who is willing to reinstate his rational offspring, in all the blessings which naturally belong to the filial relation; of which blessings they might, without injustice, have been disinherited:—that he will, in every respect, act towards them as a wise and beneficent Parent:—that unto them who no longer continue to be "contentious and disobedient to the truth, but who, through the influence of faith, seek, by patient continuance in well doing, for glory, honour, and immortality, he will communicate the inheritance of eternal life."

It is easy to perceive that this filial confidence is to be in exercise, through every period of the Christian's life. It forms the Christian character. *He lives by faith.* It sanctions all his hopes. It animates to the most arduous contests in the Christian warfare. It inspires patience and resignation in seasons of affliction and distress. It is the life and spirit of genuine prayer, which is constantly enjoined; and from which such aids are to be expected.

By these Characteristics of the nature and practical influence of faith, it is to be distinguished from a mere *speculative* Belief, which occupies the head without improving the heart; which having no influence upon any worthy affection, can be of no benefit to Man, and

which contains nothing to recommend it to the approbation of his Maker.

We have remarked that one characteristic of a rational Faith is, that it is founded upon a solid Basis. It is not an arbitrary unauthorized expectation; a creature of the fancy, or a conjectural hope. We must know him, in whom we place our confidence, and have competent evidence that we have not mistaken his character. Prudence demands that we make due inquiry into his character, dispositions, declarations, and promises. If these be correspondent to our wishes, it may be extremely impertinent to expect that he will communicate to us every minute circumstance, in his plans to befriend us; and it may be both ungrateful and dangerous to reject his kind offices, unless we be made acquainted with the whole of their nature and extent.

Every Christian maintains that his faith is founded on this solid Basis: that the evidence of the truth of a Revelation which has animated his hopes, are numerous; and that they are as convincing as the nature of human testimony, and the manifest wisdom and goodness, which characterise a plan ascribed to a wise and good God, can render them. He asserts, that of the multitudes who have studied the evidences of Chris-

tianity, with earnestness and impartiality, few, very few, have rejected this religion as a fable. The majority have perceived that objections, the most formidable, were founded upon ignorance or misconceptions; and that they are gradually dying away with the ignorance which suggested them.

As, in these Disquisitions, we are still occupied in tracing the internal evidences of a divine revelation, both to the Jews and the Gentiles, it will be proper to reserve our own observations, until we shall have closed our pursuit. Should the plan we have adopted, contribute in any degree to remove some of the objections which are still made to our holy religion, we shall be amply rewarded for our endeavours. It is our ambition to lend our feeble aid to the advocates for Christianity, by evincing that every one who receives it, as the choicest gift from heaven, is much better able " to give a *reason* for the hope that is in him," than the Unbeliever to give a reason for his rejection of these hopes, as the phantoms of a deluded mind.

In a former disquisition, we attempted to trace the influence of the Jewish Revelation, in

protecting those principles of true religion and virtue, which are demonstrably essential to human felicity, from being extinguished by human depravity; and in acting as a gradual corrective of this depravity, preparatory to the subsequent and final Revelation of God. We have now attempted to shew that the blessings of Christianity, as distinct from those of the Jewish dispensation, consist in their being professedly extended to the whole human Race, without the most distant appearance of a partiality towards a particular people:—that they are introduced by one, who is of a more exalted and perfect character than any of the former prophets; who was pre-eminently the Son of God:—that it reveals the Deity to us, no longer as a *God of terror*, but as a *Father*, universally benevolent, seeking to be reconciled to his offending offspring:—that he is uniformly acting towards us according to the choicest of those parental principles, with which he has inspired the human breast; not only by making ample provision for our support, but by superintending our Education, instructing us by perfect precepts and perfect example:—that the sufferings to which his intelligent offspring are exposed, in their passage through life, are inflicted by *parental affection*, in order to correct their Errors

and imperfections, and prepare them for a future Inheritance :—that the Assurance of a future Inheritance was reserved, as the last and best gift to the human race :—and that the representations given of it, present us with the most powerful motives which the human Imagination can conceive, to practise holiness, and dispose us to "deny all ungodliness and every worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and Godly in the present world :"—and, finally, that a firm belief in these truths is absolutely necessary, because it is by such a belief alone that they can become influential. This is a faith, and this only, that will enable us "to overcome the world."

We have thus attempted to fulfil our engagements, when we proposed "to investigate the important principles contained in each Dispensation, as far they respect the moral state and nature of Man; and as they discover to us the plans of Deity in promoting the cause of virtue and happiness, through the medium of pure and undefiled Religion." It is hoped that these investigations, however imperfect, will have manifested "the close connection which subsist between the different parts of the divine œconomy, and have enabled us to trace the cor-

respondence between the nature of Man, his best affections, most exalted desires and expectations, and the plans of Providence concerning him."*

As far as we may have succeeded in this attempt, we shall have displayed the *superlative excellency of Christianity.*

* See Preliminary Observations to the Jewish Dispensation, Page 77.

PART. II.

ON THE PECULIAR MANNER IN WHICH THESE BLESSINGS ARE COMMUNICATED TO MANKIND: OR, THE MEDIATORIAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

It will be acknowledged, with one voice, that the great blessings of Christianity are revealed to us by the Messiah; the last messenger from heaven. He it is who has promulgated pardon to the penitent; brought life and immortality to light; hath placed before us a promised inheritance, and both by precept and example, hath instructed us in our duty, that we may become qualified for the enjoyment of it.

These are facts which every Christian admits; but there is a great diversity of opinion respecting various peculiarities which characterise his mission; or, in other words, what are the precise ideas which the Scriptures authorise us to entertain concerning the *mediatorial office of Christ?* What has he done or suffered more

than the other prophets and teachers of righteousness, in the œconomy of man's salvation? That there are obscurities respecting this subject, must be inferred from the diversities in opinion concerning it, so prevalent among Christians. These obscurities ought to convince every reflecting mind, that accurate conceptions concerning it, cannot be of equal importance, with a belief in those doctrines which have hitherto engaged our attention. Wherever there have been sincere endeavours to obtain a knowledge of the truth, involuntary ignorance will not disqualify the penitent and obedient children of God, for the enjoyment of that inheritance, for which their piety and exemplary virtues are preparing them. Yet the subject is not of small importance. It is desirable and useful to form just conceptions of every part of the Christian scheme; but to know the extent of our obligations to the great Saviour of mankind, must be peculiarly gratifying to every expectant of the promised blessings. While it satisfies, what may be termed a devout curiosity, it may inspire him with deeper gratitude, and deeper humility, towards an offended parent. It may teach him rightly to appreciate the extraordinary merits of his Saviour; and give an additional energy to those animating motives, which

the preceding doctrines are calculated to inspire. We may farther observe, that as indications of Wisdom consist in the choice and adaptation of means to the important ends proposed, we are authorised to infer that the wisdom of the Most High will shine with augmenting lustre, in proportion as we are able to form clear conceptions of such adaptations.

Whoever pays due attention to the current language of the New Testament, will perceive that this last Messenger from heaven, is always mentioned with a peculiar elevation of style. He is distinguished from every other Prophet, by a greater diversity of titles; and this exclusive application of titles, must refer to some peculiarities in his character and office, which render them exclusively pertinent.

The other prophets are considered in the light of servants, and occasional messengers. Jesus Christ is represented as the beloved Son of God. They were pious and faithful, but they had many of the moral infirmities incident to human nature. *He* was perfect in the eyes of a holy God. Many have suffered martyrdom for the truth, but of no one has it been said, that he

died for our sins; nor has it been inferred that "because one died for all, then were all dead." However pure their precepts, or unquestionable the authority by which they were uttered, of no other teachers has it been said, that they were made unto us "Wisdom and Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption." None of them are denominated Sanctifiers, Redeemers, Propitiations for Sin, and Mediators between God and Man. Nor is it said that through their Righteousness we are justified in the sight of God; or that we are saved through faith in their Names; or that there is no salvation in *any other.* The titles of Messiah, the Saviour, Christ the anointed, Emanuel, of which the sublime interpretation, is *God with us,* are ascribed to him alone. Of no other martyr, who has died in defence of the truth, has it been said, that he had *power to lay down his life*, and *power to take it up:* that death had no dominion over him; nor could he be retained a prisoner in the grave.

Jesus Christ is also represented to us in the character of a Sovereign. When he was arraigned before Pilot he asserted his right to the title, although his kingdom was not of this world. Him alone of all the prophets, hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to

give repentance and remission of sins. We are commanded to present all our petitions to our heavenly father in his *name*; and in his name alone. In the salutations and benedictions uttered by the apostles, he is represented as co-operating with the Father, in communicating blessings to those who believe in him. "Grace be with you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ," is the favourite language.

Such extraordinary peculiarities, naturally suggest the inference, that the Saviour of the world is not only pre-eminent in the line of prophetic mission, but that there is an essential and characteristic difference in the nature of his office, from that of every other messenger of God.

Some Christians, eager to emulate the apostles and prophets, in conferring honour upon the great Saviour of mankind, have thought themselves justified in proposing an hypothesis, by which they conceive that all these characteristic attributes of his mission are explained and displayed. By considering the current language respecting our Saviour, in connection with the terrible judgments denounced against sin; and the strong expressions of wrath and indignation, against the workers of iniquity;

they conclude, that the natural and inevitable consequences of human transgressions, would have been everlasting misery, to every individual sinner, had not the Saviour presented himself as a *ransom* for their sins; by a *purchase* which has satisfied the divine justice, from its being adequate to the offence. They assert that there is an inherent malignity in sin, which would render it inconsistent with the injured majesty of God, and the nature of divine justice, to pardon a sinner without a plenary atonement being made, by a sacrifice of the just for the unjust. They consider the infinite merits of the all-perfect Jesus, united with the intenseness of his sufferings, in supporting his father's wrath, as a full compensation for the sins of those who shall finally be saved. This all-sufficiency is likewise ascribed to the union of the divine nature with the human; so that the Messiah being perfect God and perfect Man, he is *enabled* to "save to the uttermost all those who believe in him."

These sentiments astonish Christians of another description. They hope and believe them to be merely hypothetical. They assert that there are no expressions in the sacred scriptures which authorise such inferences. They allege that some parts of this system are mani-

festly inconsistent with themselves: That the divine nature cannot suffer, and that the human nature of Christ cannot possess the requisite infinitude of merit. They exclaim also, that such a representation of the economy of salvation, is totally inconsistent with the character of a Father, disposed to be reconciled to his offending offspring, which shines so conspicuous in this last revelation of God. They deem it, therefore, more rational to have recourse to expletives, in order to mitigate and qualify those strong scriptural expressions which have given rise to an hypothesis, so exceptionable in their opinion, and so repugnant to reason. Accordingly, they explain all those elevated and emphatic descriptions of our Saviour's character and offices, as indications of pre-eminence, in consequence of the extraordinary endowments he enjoyed; the perfection of his moral character; his voluntary submission to an ignominious death; his triumphant resurrection, by which he manifested the truth of his mission, and also brought life and immortality to light. In all these he stood alone, and without competitor.

These important truths, however, are not of themselves satisfactory to their opponents. They still urge that there are numerous passages in the epistles, that are not sufficiently illustrated

by them:—that something further must be implied in the terms, Ransom, Propitiation, Redemption. He gave himself a *ransom* for all; he was *made to be sin for us*, who knew no sin; he hath *redeemed us from the curse of the law*, being made a *curse* for us; he hath *purchased his Church with his blood; he has washed us from our sins in his blood.* They assert that expressions of a similar nature are extremely numerous: that the whole current of scripture phraseology is in their favour; importing not only a pre-eminence, but a new, distinct, and infinitely more important office, than has been executed by any other prophet of God. They earnestly enforce the necessity of suppressing those objections, which the feeble reason of man dares to oppose, to the doctrines clearly revealed in the oracles of God.

But is there no medium between the two extremes? Can the language of Scripture, and the reason of Man, be in reality at variance? Are we to extinguish the light of reason, that we may comprehend what is the will of God? For revelation must address itself to the Understanding. Many things may be true which oppose popular and universal *opinions*, or it

would be impossible to eradicate ignorance and error; but nothing can come from God which contradicts universal Reason. Reason is the only guide of rational beings. It is by this alone that they are able to distinguish between truth and error; between absurdities which ought to be rejected, and principles worthy of being received. When Christians, of any denomination, admonish us to renounce our reason, the admonition itself is given upon principles which they deem to be perfectly rational. They are compelled to ascribe their belief in the truth of Christianity, to the convictions of the Understanding; and when they urge, that it is the duty of fallible man, to submit his reason to the doctrines of revelation, the position is founded upon the argument, that man is liable to numerous errors, but the Oracles of God cannot err. As no Protestant will conform to the advice of an advocate for the Roman tenet of transubstantiation; as he will not fail to pronounce it absurd, in defiance of the inhibition, by what authority does *he* enforce it? or why does he not perceive the fallacy of this principle, when adopted by himself?

Every Christian will acknowledge that we ought to submit our opinions to the Oracles of God. But the grand question is, how shall we dis-

tinguish the Oracles of God, from the doctrines of Man? The interpretations which they give to the language of Scripture, although they may seem to approach nearer to its current phraseology, are still hypothetical. Some matters of fact are related in such clear unequivocal language, that no explanation will be necessary, for none can be clearer. When expositors find themselves obliged to deviate from the language of Scripture, they can do no more than give *their own opinions* respecting its genuine sense. These opinions may be false. They may approve themselves to our reason, and we may adopt them as truths; but in this case they are enforced by the authority of Reason. The sentiments of Christians, upon numberless points, are extremely various, and opposite to each other, and yet they universally appeal to the Oracles of God as vouchers for their truth. Whence does this diversity of opinion proceed, and how are the contentions engendered by them to be remedied?

The subject deserves our attention.

If we advert to the origin of human knowledge, we shall find that it is derived from two sources; from absolute facts recorded or made

known to us; and from legitimate *inferences.* The one depends upon proofs rendered obvious to the senses; the others are the deductions of reason. The evidence of the senses is prior to that of reason; it is more immediately obvious, but its limits are very circumscribed. Extensive and innumerable, may be the just inferences from obvious facts, although these should be comparatively few.

To the evidence of Fact, belong those articles of revealed religion, which occupied our attention under the preceding head. Every Christian believes in them by his confidence in the Revelation. He knows that they were repeatedly published at the introduction of Christianity, and that the primitive churches were established upon those principles. The knowledge by Induction, relates to certain conclusions drawn immediately from these facts; or from different expressions incidentally used, by the first preachers of Christianity, which had some reference to them. This Induction is a source of much valuable knowledge; but it is a source of much contention, and of many errors. It is *here* that debates commence. Inferences may possess various degrees of evidence from the possible, and the probable, to the indubitable. Opposite inferences will be

drawn by different persons, according to the precise point of view in which they behold the subject; and by the same person at different periods, in proportion to his more extensive knowledge of peculiar circumstances. Gross ignorance will certainly draw wrong conclusions. Partial knowledge is very liable to err, because inferences drawn from a single fact, or from a few circumstances, to the total neglect of others, which belong also to the subject, generally induce a precipitancy of decision, which farther examination will find to be unwarranted.

Those who would establish particular doctrines by Inferences, are biassed, much more than they apprehend, by adventitious circumstances. Their former habits and modes of thinking, familiarize their minds to principles, which appear extravagant to persons who are not under a similar influence. The prejudices imbibed in early life, will fetter the exercise of their reasoning powers in more advanced years. A residue of first impressions will not always be effaced, by a perception that they were not sanctioned by reason. The authority of great names has no small degree of force. Wise and learned men must be supposed to know better than others; and their opinions will always be

advanced with peculiar earnestness, in every cause where these opinions are in unison with our own.

We shall illustrate the above positions by a few instances.

Those converts from Paganism, to whom the doctrine of a metamorphosis was familiar, did not discover any absurdity in receiving, in the most literal sense, the expressions uttered by our Saviour, at his last supper with his disciples; and they were afraid of violating the terms, "take eat, this is my body; this is my blood, drink ye all of it," by giving them a *metaphorical* import. That love of the marvellous, so natural to ignorant minds, also rendered the literal sense infinitely more impressive; and it communicated an imposing solemnity to the ordinance. The authority of a Church, to which infallibility is ascribed, and the early prejudices of education, continue to silence the voice of reason.

The rite of baptism was uniformly practised upon the first Christians. This is an historical fact. It was at that period an *initiating* ordinance. Every convert from Judaism, or from Pagan Idolatry, appeared to be regenerated, as it were, by baptism. They were emblematically washed from the obsolete injunctions of one religion, and the impurities of the

other. These are historical facts which no one is disposed to deny. But what contentions have not been agitated, in subsequent ages, concerning the proper Subjects of Baptism? Questions have arisen whether the initiating baptism of converted parents, do not virtually include their offspring? If not, whether *children* should be consecrated in their *infancy*, by a baptismal act of the parents, or their representatives; or whether it should not be *their own* act, and postponed until they arrive to years of discretion? What differences of opinion also have arisen concerning the *quantity* of water that should be deemed valid; or the *particular mode* of its application? Whether the sign of the cross would add to the solemnity of the ordinance? Whether this was essential to its validity? Whether it should be made with *three* fingers at once, in honour of the Trinity, or whether the repetition of the sign, in pronouncing the distinguishing name of each person, would not be equally reverential and efficacious? These are secondary subjects and inferences, either drawn from imperfect documents, or from ignorance and inattention, to some decisive circumstance respecting the ordinance itself.

Again, that our Saviour was superior to every other Being clothed with humanity, is admitted

by all Christians. But he is represented in various, and even opposite points of view, in the sacred writings. This has embarrassed the minds of many pious persons, and occasioned violent contests among polemical Divines. Jesus Christ has repeatedly termed himself the *Son of Man.* The history of his life manifests that he was subjected to human infirmities. St. Paul says that "in all things he was made like unto his *brethren*, sin only excepted." He lived in all respects like an human being, and he even died the death of a malefactor. Hence, one party of Christians think themselves fully authorised to pronounce him *truly and properly*, a MAN; and they apply all those expressions from which their opponents draw different conclusions, merely as descriptive of the dignity of his mediatorial character. Other Christians assiduously collect all the passages expressive of his high dignity, as the basis of an opposite hypothesis. When they are informed that he is declared to be the Emanual, *God with us;* that he thought it not *robbery to be equal with God*; when he says, I and my father are *one;* when they read that "by him all things were made;" "that he has promised to be with his disciples always;" that St. Stephen, at the hour of his martyrdom, supplicated the Lord Jesus

to receive his spirit; they infer that he possessed also a divine nature, in junction with the human. They assert that the *Logos* is applied to Christ, and that this Logos was not only *with* God, but that he *was* God; and they think themselves fully authorised to pronounce that he was God incarnate, the Deity himself miraculously uniting with the corporeal system of a man, and thus forming a distinct person from that of the Father.

A third party adopt an hypothesis, which is a medium between the two extremes.

They suppose that the above descriptions of this exalted Person, are applicable to him as being the Son of God, by what they term, *an eternal generation.* They represent him to be the *first born* of every creature; to possess a divine nature, by which he is entitled to all those terms of honour which are ascribed to him. They consider him as having enjoyed the favour of God before the foundation of the world; and as descending from the divine abode, in obedience to his Father's will, and in order to save mankind.

But as he is described as being *sent* of God; as he declared, "my Father is *greater* than I," and as he repeatedly asserted his constant dependence upon the Father, and prayed to him in

the hour of distress; and as he acknowledged that he was ignorant of some of the counsels of God, they conclude that he must be inferior to the Father; and if an object of worship, it must be with inferior honours.

Whoever of these partizans shall be so fortunate as to possess the truth, he must ascribe the advantage to the justness of his Inference; after he has compared together these various representations, and given to each its due degree of force.

The only inferences we shall presume to draw from the subject are, that if accuracy of knowledge, respecting the person of Christ had been as important to Man, as accuracy of knowledge, respecting the points stated in the preceding disquisition, the revelation of it would have been equally conspicuous:—that had there not been many difficulties attending the subject, such a diversity of opinions could not have arisen:—and that these difficulties should make the combatants humble, diffident of themselves, and charitable towards each other.

It is our earnest desire to collect and arrange important principles which are received by Christians in general, and, as far as it is possible, to escape contest, although placed upon a stage thronged with polemical combatants. We

solely wish to invite the different partizans, to compare their favourite dogmata with principles which they will not oppose. We shall therefore direct our attention to historical facts, which cannot be denied; and submit the inferences we shall draw from them to the impartial judgment of our readers. As our statements will be more ample than it is usual for eager partizans to make, who manifest the disposition to collect evidences in favour of their own opinions, rather than duly to weigh the arguments of their opponents, there is a *possibility* of discovering a medium of explanation, concerning the mediatorial character of the Saviour, which, if it should not reconcile controversialists, may somewhat soften their asperities.

According to the sentiments of each party, this mediatorial Character is represented in the Scriptures in two opposite points of view. During his abode upon earth, the Son of God is considered as in a state of *humiliation;* and after his resurrection, he was declared to be in a state of *exaltation.* "Him has God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour. He is also appointed to judge the world." "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son."

We shall first consider the peculiar offices of

Christ during the state of his Humiliation, and advert to the circumstances by which he was distinguished from every other Prophet; and, secondly, the honours to which he was exalted, in consequence of the meritorious execution of his office.

Since a partial view of the subject must expose to errors, we will avoid this extreme, though we should incur the imputation of prolixity; and as our sentiments may in some respects be different from those which are generally received, justice to our argument, and to ourselves, requires that we should be as explicit as possible.

We shall first consider the peculiar offices of Christ, during the state of his humiliation, by which he was distinguished from every other Prophet, or minister of righteousness; and secondly, the honours to which he was exalted on account of the faithful execution of them.

CHAPTER I.

On the Mediatorial Office of Christ, in a State of Humiliation.

THERE are no terms, by which the blessings of the Gospel are more frequently described, than by the terms *Salvation*, being *saved*, &c. "The Gospel is said to be the power of God unto *Salvation*." "The Grace of God bringeth *Salvation*." How shall we escape if we neglect so great *Salvation*. Christ is called the *Saviour* of the world. There is no other name whereby we must be *saved*. We shall be *saved* from wrath through him, &c. &c.

The terms *Salvation*, *Saviour*, being *saved*, necessarily refer to certain evils or dangers in which the subject is involved, or to which he is exposed; and from which it is of the utmost moment to be rescued or preserved. In the Old Testament, every kind of protection, defence, delivery, is styled *Salvation*; and the God of Israel is frequently denominated the God of their

Salvation. In the Gospel of Christ, Salvation is represented in two points of view, as being saved from sin, and from the consequences, or punishment of sin. Thus it is said, "he shall save his people from their sins;" and also that they "are saved from the wrath of God." When it is said, that "he shall save his people from their sins," it may be alleged, that by his precepts, example, encouraging promises and assistance, they shall be excited to repentance, and be reclaimed from wickedness; and that he will thus "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." In this sense, the benefit derived from their reclamation, consists in their being liberated from all the evils, to which a continuance in sin would have subjected them. Liberation from vice or iniquity, is certainly a freedom from the bondage, in which the wicked are frequently represented as being held, in the strongest fetters. "He that committeth sin is the servant of sin," says St. Paul. "The creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious *liberty* of the children of God." "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? Stand fast,

therefore, in the *liberty* wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

But liberation from the power of sin, and from the miseries suffered under its immediate dominion, is not the exclusive signification of the term Salvation. We are told that "he who endureth to the end shall be *saved;*" but he that endureth to the end, in a course of righteousness, is liberated from sin, and, according to this limited sense of the phrase, is saved already. Evils are impending to the wicked, distinct from the pernicious consequences naturally flowing from a vicious course. Another object of this Salvation, we are repeatedly told, is to *save them from the wrath of God;* or from these judgments denounced by the Universal Sovereign against all the workers of iniquity. They are frequently warned to "flee from the wrath to come." "The Wrath of God is revealed from heaven," says the Apostle, "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." The wicked are perpetually represented to be in a state of *condemnation;* "but there is no *condemnation* to them that are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

That *vice, immorality, wickedness,*—however

we may choose to express mental depravity and disobedience to the divine commands, whether in ethical or theological language,—that Wickedness is, in its own nature, the bane of human felicity, must be obvious to every man who observes and thinks. That it is offensive to God, is admitted by every one who acknowledges the existence and moral government of God; and every one will own that the manifestations of his displeasure must be dreadful.

When we were investigating the nature of moral obligation, we observed that all governments, without exception, are constituted upon three principles. They have an *object*, *precepts*, or Rules, for the attainment of that object, the *sanctions* of rewards and punishments, by which obedience is enforced. These operate upon the hopes and fears of men. The enforcement of rules by sanctions, implies *authority*. It converts rules into *precepts*, in distinction from *advice* or *recommendation*; and the union of precepts and sanctions, constitutes a Law.

We observed that the professed object of all laws is to secure some apparent Good; although in the eagerness to obtain this, they may be

productive of mischief, in some other direction. Human laws are frequently capricious, versatile, sanguinary; and they generally rely much more upon the influence of *terror* than upon the allurements of personal rewards. We observed also, that the laws of *Morality* were instituted upon the same essential principles, of Utility, of Precepts or Rules, and of Sanctions; but that the proposed good is *universal;* the Precepts always wise and salutary, and the Sanctions momentous. Uncertainties surround the denunciations of punishment, but the rewards, immediate and future, are most obvious and most encouraging.

We shall now remark, that if we advert to the character of human punishments, inflicted upon supposed delinquents, we shall perceive that the motives for punishing may be distinguished into the following classes. Punishments may be inflicted from a principle of resentment against the supposed offender;—by the desire of setting a salutary example, and deterring others from violating the laws;—in order to secure good subjects from suffering injury by the conduct of the depraved;—and, finally, with the benevolent desire of reclaiming the offender himself.

According to the constitution of our moral nature, we are made to *approve* of what we deem

to be right, and to *censure* that which is wrong. We possess a quick sense of merit and of demerit. We acknowledge, without a dissenting voice, that virtue *deserves* to be exempt from sufferings, and that vice *deserves* to be exposed to them. This principle is the guardian of right conduct; yet of all the others it is the most liable to be abused by mankind. Sudden indignation and resentment may prompt us to exaggerate the turpitude of the action, and render us deaf or blind to its palliatives. We may thus be guilty of an injustice from our respect for virtue. In *personal* injuries, the predominance of self-love, will render us peculiarly liable to such excesses. This predominance may also make us unjust from another cause. It will dispose us to entertain resentments against the *person* of the offender, after his Conduct and Dispositions may have been totally changed. As long as any one continues to be depraved, we are authorized to resent his depravity. But upon the assurances of his penitence and reformation, such resentments ought in justice to cease; for the proper object ceases to exist. The affections to be now excited and indulged, ought to correspond with the present character. We ought now to forgive, approve, and perhaps to admire.

To punish for the sake of Example, is to select an offender from the multitude, for a punishment, the infliction of which, by striking the senses, may deeply affect the minds of the spectators. But it necessarily supposes that the spectators may possess propensities to commit similar crimes; and that they are more easily governed by terror than by reason, or by a proper sense of duty.

There may be, in civil society, cases of such extreme degeneracy, as to deprive the offender of all the rights of social intercourse, expose him to universal contempt, and render him unworthy of existence, since his existence is dangerous to others. Nay, although the extinction of being must be considered as a tremendous punishment, in itself, yet absolute annihilation is preferable to a life destitute of rational enjoyment, and baneful to social enjoyment. For in this state the subject, by being dead to virtue, becomes as it were a gangrened member of the community. Societies of the Degenerate and Irreclaimable, cannot exist without being exposed to perpetual scenes of horror. Their extirpation will be dreaded by themselves as a punishment, from their instinctive love of life; but in reality it is not a punishment equal to that which they inflict

upon themselves and upon each other, by permanent profligacy.

To punish, in order to reform the delinquent, is doubtless the most noble of all the motives. It seeks to rescue a wanderer from destruction, while it holds forth an example, both of terror and of encouragement to others. Severity thus directed, is an act of mercy to the offender himself, and it may engraft his future well-being upon his present sufferings.

These particulars are recalled to our memory, that they may be the more readily applied to the subjects before us. Should any ambiguities present themselves, in these our scriptural researches, they will naturally induce us to prefer those explanations which are most consonant with the principles acknowledged and approved, by the universal suffrage of mankind.

Having thus endeavoured to form accurate ideas concerning the term Salvation; and also concerning the Objects of punishment in general, we shall proceed to enquire what is that punishment of sin which was denounced against offenders, prior to the advent of the Saviour of the world; from which it was a grand design in his mission to rescue mankind? In what respects, in what manner, and to what an extent may Christ be considered as a Saviour from this punishment?

and for what purposes is the remission of punishment obtained?

SECTION I.

Enquiry into the Punishment of Disobedience, denounced in the Jewish Dispensation.

The first and leading denunciation against sin, or disobedience to the divine commands is recorded in the book of Genesis; and it stands thus: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, *thou shalt surely die.*"

The dreadful sentence passed upon the actual transgressors was the following: "To the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to

thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground : for out of it wast thou taken ; *for dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return.*"

The punishment denounced against the first murderer upon record was the following : " And the Lord said unto Cain, now thou art cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thine hands. When thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth."

When the Sins of the Antediluvian World were augmented and spread beyond the power of reformation, when "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," so that, according to the strong and expressive language of Scripture, "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart;" the punishment threatened, and afterwards executed, was, " I will *destroy* man whom I have created, *from the face of the earth,* both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them."

The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, being sunk into the depths of human depravity, which was as universal as it was shameful, the punishment was *total destruction.* "The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."

All the sanctions of the laws promulgated by Moses, under the divine direction, whether these laws were civil, ceremonial, or moral, consisted in the promise of every kind of worldly prosperity, upon the obedience of the Jewish nation; and the threat of every calamity that can fall upon a people, as a punishment of disobedience. "And it shall come to pass if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments, which I have commanded thee this day; that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth, and all these blessings shall come upon thee. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, blessed shalt thou be in the field, &c. &c. And it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, all these Curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field; cursed thy

basket and thy store; cursed the fruit of thy body and the fruit of thy land; the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep; cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, and all that thou settest thine hand upon for to do; until *thou be destroyed,* and *until thou perish* quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings whereby thou hast forsaken me, &c." *

The whole history of the Jewish nation is a perpetual comment upon these promises and threatenings. This has been made evident from the sketch of their history, given in a preceding disquisition. The reward of obedience was national prosperity. Their occasional rebellions received the chastisement of public calamities, wars, pestilence, famine, captivities; and those who were irreclaimably wicked, which was the character of the ten revolting tribes, were dispersed and destroyed as a people.

The expostulations and pathetic invitations to repentance, which are so frequently interspersed with the judgements threatened or inflicted, speak a similar language. They are warnings to avoid impending *destruction.*

"Cast away from you all your transgressions

* Deut. ch. xviii.

whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the *death* of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn yourselves and *live*, &c.* How shall I give thee up, Ephraim; how shall I deliver thee, Israel? &c. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return *to destroy* Ephraim."

In a word, the severest punishment of the wicked is always expressed by the terms *death, destruction, perdition.* They had no conceptions of a punishment more severe, or which was extended to a future state. In the books where the law is promulgated and enforced, in the Psalms of David, in the Proverbs of Solomon, and in the books of the Prophets, the uniform language is, "Let thine enemies *perish*, O Lord. I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people; let me alone that I may *destroy* them, and *blot out their name from under heaven.*† Thou lovest all-devouring words. O thou deceitful tongue. God shall likewise *destroy* thee for ever; he shall take thee away and pluck thee out of *thy dwelling place*, and *root thee out of the land of the living.*‡ When the wicked *perish* there is a shouting.§ Behold the day of the Lord

* Ez. xviii. 31, 32.

† Deut. ix. 13.

‡ Ps. lii. 4, 5.

§ Prov. xi. 10.

cometh, cruel both with wrath and with fierce anger, to lay the *land desolate;* and he shall *destroy the sinners thereof out of it.* Isaiah xiii. 9. I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord: I will not pity nor spare, nor have mercy, but *destroy* them."*

To enumerate all the passages containing similar expressions, would be to transcribe too large a portion of the Old Testament. They are to be found in almost every page. They are not incidental, that is, called forth by incidental circumstances, to which they are confined, and by which they are to be explained. They constitute the uniform language of the scriptures, wherever a reference is made to punishment, or to the consequences of guilt. Hence they are totally distinct from metaphorical forms of speech, which are deviations from the current style, and are always employed, not to introduce new principles, but to illustrate and enforce what is already known.†

The important question is, what can be the import of all these expressions? What ideas are they calculated, or were they intended to convey? There are three modes of interpretation. *Death, Destruction, Perishing,* may signify

* Jer. xiii. 14. † See Note E.

an *absolute annihilation of the whole Man*:—or, the Destruction of the animal frame, with all its mundane connections and relations, in such a manner, that the operation of every vital power, respecting the present system, shall for ever be destroyed, and the vital powers be suspended respecting either activity or consciousness:—or, the Separation of the soul, as it is termed, from the body, in such a manner, that it shall retain its conscious powers, in some unknown state.

Annihilation, in the absolute sense, implies *total destruction* of both soul and body, or the organised system. It supposes an Impossibility that they should be restored or re-vivified; or a Predetermination of the Omnipotent, that they shall exist no more.

The *Loss of consciousness*, and of the powers of action, with the dissolution of the animal frame, does not imply absolute irrecoverable annihilation. It allows us to suppose, that the vital principle, whatsoever that may be, is still in existence; although in a state of inactivity, while it shall remain destitute of the organization which we perceive to be necessary for sensation and action; and that its operations must be suspended until instrumentality be restored. In this sense, *Destruction*, *Perdition*,

Death, refer, not only to a complete disorganization of the corporeal frame, its solution into its constituent principles, but to the loss of sense, consciousness, and motion,—the total annihilation of every mundane connection,—a dissolution of the present system of existence, with all that is desirable and interesting in it, together with an uncertainty respecting everything future; leaving the minds of the living, in a perpetual fluctuation of hope and fear, concerning the destination that may await them.

The sentence of Death has also been considered as referring to the Separation of the more noble and spiritual part of rational beings, called the Soul, from the inferior terrestrial particles constituting the Body. In consequence of this separation, it is supposed, by some Divines, not only to retain its consciousness, but to possess increased vigour; being liberated from the incumbrance of the flesh in which it was confined, as in a prison.

According to this opinion, the Soul of every individual must be supposed to exist in a state of happiness or misery, as soon as it has quitted this tenement of clay; and death, destruction, &c. must in their signification, be applied to the dissolution of the corporeal frame, and of that connection or intercourse which the soul

possessed, through its medium, with the present state of things. When the terms *death*, *destruction*, *perishing*, are considered as the punishment of the Wicked, the punishment must be supposed to consist in their being summoned from a state of trial and probation, to appear before the judge of all men, in a depraved and impenitent state. As the day of grace is passed, and as the soul is in its own nature immortal, the aweful inference is, that the souls of the wicked will exist in eternal misery.

The reader will perceive that in the doctrines of absolute *annihilation*, and of the *suspension* of the vital powers, which is sometimes termed the sleeping of the soul, there is nothing inconsistent with the expressions, *death*, *destruction*, *perishing*, according to the *literal* acceptation; for they are strictly applicable to each system. The latter opinion is a singular deviation from the literal and accepted sense of these phrases, demanding very powerful arguments to support it. What these arguments are, which shall prove satisfactory to those who have not been nourished in a particular system, or mode of thinking, it is not easy to devise. The objections to such an interpretation are obvious, numerous, and momentous. This

hypothesis is founded on a pre-conception, that the Soul of man is essentially conscious, spiritual, and immortal. But this pre-conception, to make it the solid basis of an hypothesis, must first be proved; and as we are now examining, not into human systems, or the tenets of philosophic minds, but into the acknowledged Revelation of God, which we must suppose to discover to us whatever it is most interesting to man to know, we expect to find it there. No other authority can, in this case, be admitted. But in the Old Testament we shall search in vain. There is not a single expression which authorised the sentiment. Death, perdition, perishing, destruction, &c. are the only terms employed to express the excess of punishment. Not one reference is made to the future state of the soul.

No one, surely, will urge the passage in the Book of Ecclesiastes, "Then shall the dust return to the dust as it was, and the Spirit shall return unto God who gave it." The word spirit is incessantly used in the sacred writings, and in a great variety of senses, to which it would be absurd to annex the idea of *Immortality*. Upon the destruction of the Antediluvian world, it is said, that *all flesh died that moved upon the earth*, both of *fowl*, and of *cattle*, and of *beasts*, and of *every creeping* thing that creep-

eth upon the earth, and every man. *All in whose nostrils was the breath of the* SPIRIT *of life*, died. Will it be said of them all, that their spiritual and immortal parts were separated from their material frames to go into a state of retribution? But if we examine minutely into the general tenour of this preacher's doctrine, we shall discover that he was too ignorant of futurity to admit of the above interpretation. He asserts that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrifices, and to him that sacrifices not; as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that frameth an oath, *For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.*"

Under every kind of government, even the most arbitrary and tyrannical, it is the universal custom *to be explicit* respecting those rewards and punishments, by which the mandates are sanctioned. There are no instances to the contrary, among subjects that are treated with a cruel severity. It is *essential* to a *just* government, and to a *wise* code of laws, that not only

the *offence*, but its *consequences*, should be accurately known. Is it to be imagined, that the ancient subjects of God's righteous government, could have given so remote and abstract an interpretation to the language in which the consequences of disobedience were uniformly denounced? Could our first parents have supposed that the warning sentence, "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*," signified any thing more than the loss of vitality, and its expected blessing? Could their conceptions extend beyond the grave, into regions of eternal misery? Could they conceive that the true emphatic signification of *death*, was not extinction of being, but *protracted woe?* That, in reality, it implied LIFE, *conscious Existence*, *eternal Life*, an *eternal Life of Wretchedness?* After the offence was committed, it was said to him, "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, *till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.*" But could he possibly suppose that this sentence respected the *body* alone? Could his whole attention be directed to the physical and mundane effects of this dissolution, designedly, or inadvertently concealing from him, the infinitely more terrible punishment of an immortal Soul, that was impending?

The same argument is applicable to every menace that was uttered, from the first promulgation of the divine laws, to the termination of the political existence of the Jewish nation. Upon the hypothesis we oppose, the grand, the terrible punishment, of the most profligate of the human race was *concealed* from them. The Divine Being shewed infinite compassion and anxiety, as it were, lest they should suffer the *temporal* calamities to which disobedience exposed them; but not a sentence of concern is expressed about their *eternal state!* As their extreme danger was not *revealed* to them, they could not have any documents from which to draw the inferences. No one was able to supply them with a glossary by which they were to understand that *death, destruction, being consumed*, &c. &c. really signified a *life* of eternal wretchedness. The phraseology so frequently employed, ought for ever to preclude this idea. The ancient Hebrews were not versed in psychology. They had not studied the nature of the soul. Surrounded and absorbed by objects of sense, they could not be expected to speculate concerning the spiritual nature and immortal destiny of man, by the light of reason. Philosophic minds of a later period, possessing leisure and disposition

to speculate upon these abstruse subjects, could not arrive at any certainty; and it is exceedingly absurd to imagine, that a distinct and influential knowledge of a future state of immortality, should be diffused over the ages of the greatest obscurity; or that just inferences concerning this future state, should be drawn from multitudinous expressions of a contrary import.

They could only interpret all the judgments denounced against the ungodly, as referring either to the absolute destruction of animal existence; or to such a dissolution, as still leaves the subject in a state of anxious uncertainty. Those who never reflect, cannot reason. As they live like brutes, they expect to die like brutes. They pursue the objects of gratification, which are immediately before them, without any prudent concern about consequences. When dangers arrive, they are struck with those panics which an instinctive love of life will occasion, as often as life is in imminent danger. A panic which is common to the brute creation, as well as to rational beings; and it is without their examining into the moral cause of their fears, or knowing what degree of reference they may have to protracted punishment in a future world.

Those who thought deeply upon these subjects were still in a state of uncertainty. They were unable to decide between the expectation of total irremediable destruction, or some unknown mode of existence, in some unknown regions of some unknown world. This was obviously the case with the most considerate and moral writers under the hierarchy. Sometimes they expressed a degree of hope respecting futurity, at others they seemed to despair; but all their expressions of despair referred to a state of non-existence, not of existence in misery. Surely, says the pious David, "it shall be well with the righteous." "Although he slay me, I will trust in him." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." These and similar expressions, probably, relate to the inward desire and obscure expectations of future existence, under the government of so wise and powerful a Being. On the other hand, the author of the Ecclesiastes entertains the most sceptical doubts. He laments that there is no devise, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither we go. In his beautiful description of the gradual decay of the human frame by advancing years, he concludes, "then shall the dust return to the dust,

as it was, and the spirit, or breath of life, shall return unto the God who gave it:" obviously referring to the expression of Moses, God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul. "The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, after that they go to the dead."

The wisest among the heathen philosophers, those who had carried their speculations the farthest, scarcely ventured to hope. Those who had not imbibed atheistical principles, as Plato, Socrates, Cyrus, Cicero, &c.—They who revered the gods, who considered man as formed by an intelligent power, and admired his conformation, were astonished at its singularity. They beheld him infinitely *superior* in the endowments of his corporeal frame, and in the faculties of his mind, to the brute creation around him, and as inferior in peace, contentment, and happiness. They beheld him endowed with powers surpassing the conceptions which many had formed of their Gods, and exposed to evils which manifest the *impotency* of these powers. Such wonderful contrarieties lead them to suspect that the system was incomplete. This induced some philosophers to accuse the justice of the Gods; but the wisest and most moral

among them entertained the hopes that man was not at home in this life :—That this sublunary state was not the place of his final destination. But such expectations were confined to a few among the heathens, and at a period when the rational faculties had acquired unusual vigour. The multitude, in the most enlightened times, continued ignorant, insensible, and indifferent about futurity.

The above history of facts, in unison with what has been more amply stated in our disquisition, concerning the characteristic excellencies of the Jewish Dispensation, authorizes us to assert, that under the ancient œconomy, *the sole punishment denounced against disobedience, was either death and destruction,* in the most literal sense of these terms, *or the infliction of temporal calamities.* Temporal calamities were always inflicted as *chastisements* or *warnings.* They were ordained to demonstrate the indissoluble connection between obedience and prosperity, or well-being; disobedience and adversity. Such judgments were in the earth, that the inhabitants might learn righteousness. Those who were finally incorrigible, after incessant admonitions, promises, threatenings, and corrections, were reluctantly *extirpated.* They, as it were, exhausted the patience of the Almighty,

and were destroyed by the breath of his power. Of this the destruction of the Antediluvian world, when the thoughts of their hearts were only evil continually; and of the Canaanites, when they had filled up the measure of their iniquities; and of the ten tribes of Judah, when they had totally apostatized from the living and true God, were dreadful examples.

But the grand punishment denounced upon sinful Adam, and his sinful posterity, is *Death.* The wages of sin is *Death;* the irreclaimable law is, the soul *that sinneth shall die*: and as all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, the sentence is passed upon *all Men.* This sentence has been executing upon every successive generation, from the days of our first parents to the present moment, and will continue to the end of time; for it is appointed for all men *once to die.* They are destined to relinquish the life for which they have an instinctive fondness; to exchange every thing that is endearing and valuable, for the silence and gloomy uncertainty of the grave.

It will, perhaps, be urged, that this punishment is much too slight for the nature of the offence. That numbers wish to die; they are so oppressed with the cares and miseries of life,

that they consider the grave as a refuge, and prefer annihilation to existence.

We may observe, in answer, that the Being who made us, he who alone knows to the full extent our capacities for enjoyment; who knows the ample provision, the rich inheritance he has in store, for those duly qualified to possess it, will not think as man thinks. If he, who alone was offended, did not announce severer judgments upon the ancient world, it ill becomes sinful man to sharpen his arrows, which may possibly bring anguish upon themselves.

But the objector has not maturely considered what is inseparably connected with the sentence of death. The Sin which introduced it, has changed, irremediably changed, the destination of man, from that which would have been the natural reward of righteousness. It has introduced all the horrors which attend the *apprehension* of death; and all the evils of life which inspire the *dread*, that they will ultimately terminate in the dissolution of our frame. The fears of death, instinctive and habitual, greatly contribute to render life itself a burden. Nor is this dread merely personal, or, of each individual, for *himself*, it extends to all our social connections. What anxieties are inspired, when those we love,

or in whose continued existence we are deeply interested, are exposed to the dangers of death! How much is suffered from their loss! The closest ties are dissolved! The usual currents of comfort and enjoyment stopt in their course! Melancholy vacancies experienced in places which were once filled with utility to all around! Nay, there is scarcely a wretch existent, whose loss will not be a source of lamentation to some surviving wife, parent, or child! To *get a living*, is the early anxiety of life; and to attempt it, is the lot of the multitude. Man, in his natural state, is born destitute of every thing. He *gets his living* by the sweat of his brow. Those who appear to be exceptions, by possessing an abundance of the good things of this life, possess them as an inheritance from others who have laboured with anxious assiduity, and exposure to many dangers. All the pains and indispositions to which we are subjected, and which we consider as grievous sufferings, are greatly augmented by our anxieties about the *result*. *Is there danger*, is the first question that is asked? To rescue from danger, how great are the agonies to which the mind resolutely submits! When a verdict of acquittal is pronounced, and assurance is given that the danger is passed, the patient's sufferings must be ago-

nizing in the extreme, were he not to endure them with a degree of joyful patience. Counter passions may, for a season, expel the fear of death. The ardour of contest, the love of glory, the fear of disgrace, disappointment of extravagant hopes, may occasionally impel individuals to brave death, or to seek a refuge in the grave. But when the counteracting passion has subsided, the subject will, upon reflection, tremble at the danger of which he had been rendered scarcely sensible. The most magnanimous Hero of the field will earnestly solicit the aid of a physician on a bed of sickness, and in his domesticated state:

But the fear of death does more. The wretched superstitions of the heathen world indicate its terrors, although they were not augmented by the expectation of eternal misery. The horrors of dissolution stifled their natural affections, and they eagerly sacrificed the fruits of their body, for the sins of their souls; impiously attempting to extinguish the wrath of their God, by the blood of their offspring!

Another circumstance of distress, connected with this curse, is the *uncertainty* which disturbs a reflecting mind, respecting futurity. Every man feels that the dissolution of nature does not incontestibly imply total annihilation. Nay,

the *possibility* of existing somewhere, and in a manner unknown, will often deprive the mind of the dreary comfort of annihilation. This suspense of a thoughtful mind is also a severe punishment. Anxiety is among the most painful of our affections. But what uncertainty about temporal affairs, the final termination of which is always within the reach of our contemplation, can equal the doubts which have arisen concerning a future state? The *whether*, *where*, and *how*, assault the mind with a combined force. In many cases, a *knowledge* of the extent of an evil, though great in itself, affords some consolation. The fond mother who has lost her beloved child, is agonised by her ignorance, as much as by the loss. To *know* that the soul will be annihilated, might afford comfort to the Wicked and the Timid, but the possibility of existing in a state, destined for greater and more durable evils than the present, arms death with threefold horror.

From the above investigation of crimes committed, and their contingent punishments, we may perceive three distinct characters. The crime may consist in a universal disobedience to the divine commands, which places the whole

human race in a state of condemnation:—It may consist in that irreclaimable profligacy of a nation or community of people, which will render their more immediate destruction equitable and necessary:—or in those vices and aberrations to which corrective punishments may be applicable and efficacious.

The sins committed by the whole human Race, commencing with our progenitors, and continued by ourselves, naturally deprive us of a *native* or *filial* right to existence. Life, to the most perfect of created Beings, is the free gift of the universal parent, and could, at any period, be recalled without injustice. But the Wisdom and Goodness which prompted to create Beings with such enlarged powers; the wisdom and goodness which render them capable of moral and intellectual enjoyments, to an unknown extent and immeasurable duration, will doubtless continue existence, when these grand objects can be ensured. The life, and the enjoyment of life, which are granted conditionally, are necessarily forfeited if the conditions be violated; and the offenders have no other resource than the *uncovenanted* mercy of God, in place of his *covenanted* beneficence. The renewal of the forfeited charter rests solely with himself; and it is for him to prescribe the terms, should com-

passion triumph over the severity of justice. The law of death to the Disobedient being absolute, the offence being universal, the condemnation must be universal, and must permanently operate unless a most gracious repeal be announced.

The punishment of whole communities, on account of their profligacy, manifestly consists in the anticipation of that sentence which is passed upon all men. It is the sudden privation of life, and its various blessings, which might have been protracted to the space usually allotted to the human species; and this destruction presents an awful, but salutary, warning, to the surrounding nations.

Chastisement, and temporary calamities, have for their objects, the reformation of the sufferers, and admonition to surrounding spectators.

The reader will observe that our whole attention has been directed, in these enquiries, to the threatenings and punishments which were made known to the ancient world, before the advent of the Son of God. The Revelation of Christianity is a *new* Revelation, and upon very different principles. As it proposes higher rewards to the Righteous, thus it is armed

with more aweful threatenings against the Wicked. Our Saviour has asserted that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, notwithstanding their extreme wickedness, at the day of judgment, than for those who chuse darkness rather than light, now light is come into the world. St. Paul warns the Romans not to despise the riches of the divine goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, which ought to lead them to repentance: for "he will render to every man according to his deeds: unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."

Notwithstanding Christianity is always represented as a dispensation of grace and mercy, there is not, in the Old Testament, a single expression equivalent to the dreadful sentence, "Depart ye wicked into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

The intimate connection between this representation of the punishment denounced in the Old Testament against disobedience, and the repeal of the sentence of condemnation, by the

authorised Son of God, is most conspicuous. In our chapter in this Disquisition, on the future Inheritance of Sons, the subject has in some degree been anticipated. We have there shewn that the assurance of a Resurrection from the dead, was an essential characteristic in the gospel of Christ, and the introduction to eternal felicity. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," exclaims the messenger of the New Covenant, "he that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath *eternal life*, and shall not come into *condemnation*, but is passed from *Death* into *Life*." "The hour is come in which all that are in their *graves* shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good into the *resurrection of Life*, and they that have done evil into the resurrection of *condemnation*. I am the *Resurrection* and the *Life*, he that believeth in me, though he were *dead*, shall he *live*," &c. &c.

These expressions, and innumerable others of a similar kind, which it would be superfluous to repeat, evince a perfect consonance of language under the dispensation of Grace, with the judgments denounced under a dispensation of Terror. This coincidence illuminates an essential doctrine respecting the salvation of mankind. By their union, we clearly comprehend what is to

be understood by the declaration, "there is no *condemnation* to them that are in Christ; that the *curse* of the law is taken away." The *Life* promised in the gospel, is uniformly opposed to the *death* threatened by the law. *Resurrection* from the Grave implies a triumph over the *Grave.* The *Grave* has lost its victory by being obliged to deliver up its captives, instead of retaining them in a state of *oblivion, unconsciousness,* and *inactivity.* Death has lost its sting, by its not being a perpetual punishment for Mortals rendered capable, by their intellectual and moral nature, of enjoying eternal felicity; by its being introductory to immortality, instead of its being a total abolition of the human system.

This doctrine of a *Resurrection from the dead* is therefore of infinite moment. It constitutes the basis of our hopes. The resurrection of the whole human race is immediately dependent upon it; for it is uniformly represented in the Scriptures, as being synonymous with future existence. It is also uniformly considered as a consequence resulting from the triumphant Resurrection of our divine Master; who in his own person "abolished Death, and thus brought life and immortality to light." This is the grand principle which the apostolic mis-

sionaries were sent forth to promulgate; by which they made converts, and upon which they established christian communities. For by this is the sentence of condemnation revoked; that curse of the law, *the soul that sinneth shall die.*

The Apostle Peter opened his commission on the day of Penticost, before an assembly of Jews from different countries of the east, by preaching the doctrine of the *Resurrection.* "Ye men of Israel hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves know, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; have ye taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that he should be held of it." When Paul preached at Athens, "certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. Some said, what will this babbler say; other some, he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preacheth unto them Jesus and the *Resurrection.*" But this doctrine was not preached as a *speculative* doctrine. Upon it was founded the doctrine of Repentance and Acceptance with God. "When

they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." In his dispute with the Sadducees, and also in his vindication of himself before Felix, he infers the resurrection of the human race from the certainty of the fact, that Christ is risen.

Numerous are the passages, in his Epistle to the Romans, in which this great Apostle of the Gentiles inculcates these important doctrines; but in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, he enters fully into the argument, and places the hopes of his christain converts entirely upon the verity of the fact, that Christ is risen from the dead. "Now, if Christ be preached, that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; yea, and we are found false witnesses of God. But we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not

Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, *ye are yet in your sins.* Then others who are fallen asleep in Christ, are *perished.*"

In the process of his argument he adds, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised; incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in Victory." He terminates the animated argument by the triumphant exclamation, "Oh *Death* where is thy sting! Oh *Grave,* where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Numberless passages might be added to the above, indicative of one uniform tenour of language in support of the same principles. By these, we repeat it, they are distinguished from occasional or metaphorical expressions, which may always be interpreted according to the

fancy of a speculator. They prove incontestibly, that the language of our Saviour and of his Apostles, respecting the salvation of mankind, from the just punishment of sin, consists in their being liberated from *death*, corresponding with the threats denounced under the former dispensation. *Life* is opposed to *Death*. *Resurrection* from the grave is opposed to a state of *inconsciousness*, or *inactivity*. This kind of language is perfectly intelligible, when applied to the doctrine of a vital principle, whose functions are suspended in the grave, without its existence being destroyed. It is most incongruous when applied to the *Resurrection* of the material body solely, and to its reunion to a spirit already possessing immortality, in a state of happiness or misery. Nor is there a single passage in the New Testament which can be adduced, as having a decided reference to the resurrection of mere particles of matter, and their reunion with the immortal spirit, its pristine inhabitant.

We might observe, that this doctrine is not only unscriptural, but it is unsupported by reason and sound philosophy ;—that it is of no importance ;—and that it throws a dark mist over that light which came into the world to enlighten every man, even the light of life.

There is an extravagance in the opinion, that

the soul, or the conscious intellectual principle, should exist in activity, and in the vigorous exercise of its powers, without an instrumentality which has proved of such infinite use in the present state of things. It is alone through the organs of sense, or of sensation, that the mind receives all its perceptions; that it has been enabled to acquire all its knowledge, to exert all its powers, and discharge all its duties. It is through the mechanic structure of the corporeal instrument, that every office is performed. Could we suppose it to *think* without the organization of the brain, all its thoughts would be entirely useless, for it could not *act* without some instruments for action. To maintain the contrary, is to suppose that a miraculous change is to take place at the moment of corporeal dissolution. It is to suppose, that the soul which has, through the whole of human life, been so dependent upon the body, and under such infinite obligations to it, should at once enjoy liberty and enlarged powers, without that organized system, whose inlets to knowledge, it has condescended to use while destined to live in the flesh. The hypothesis supposes, that after enjoying this freedom, or using an occasional substitute, it has still an attachment to its former habitation ;—that it will be

reconciled to a body of which it has so loudly complained; and that they will subsist amicably together through the ages of eternity.

When some of the Heathen philosophers considered the body in the light of a Prison, it was in conformity to certain ideas they had entertained of the sublimity and purity of Spirit, and the baseness of Matter; and their system was not inconsistent with these notions. But will our Christian philosophers assert, that the *perfect* Adam was committed to Prison before he was guilty of a transgression? Or will they suppose that the transgression procured his *liberation*, by his having incurred the penalty of Death? But these absurdities inevitably flow from the supposition, that the soul is incarcerated in the curious corporeal frame.

Those who imagine the soul to possess a conscious existence in the intermediate state, must suppose it to enjoy happiness or to suffer misery. Its fate is therefore determined; for judgment is already past upon the deeds which have been done in the body. It is really futile to suppose, that the inanimate particles of dust shall be reassembled and vivified, in order to their being acquitted or condemned, for having been the mechanic instruments of good or evil, according to the dictates of their spiritual agent. The re-

surrection of *Man*, the revivification of the *vital principle*, a return to conscious existence, manifests its own importance; and when we ascribe all those strong expressions and encouraging promises, relative to the Resurrection, to such an event, we perceive their propriety and correspondence. The resurrection of the *corporeal frame*, exclusively, is of no moment; it is unworthy of the preparation that is making for the most important of all events, and of the solemn language which is always employed relative to it. When Christ declares, with a majestic voice, "I am the resurrection and the life," does he simply mean, I will carefully collect the pristine bodies of the saints, that each may enjoy his own? Can we suppose, that the Father of an intelligent offspring; that Jesus, the first-begotten from the dead; that the Aposles, when they were sent forth to preach a Resurrection, should invariably direct and fix the attention of the world to the *corporeal* frame, without bestowing one thought about the *spiritual* part of man, which alone is to possess happiness or suffer misery? Is not the Agent of more worth than the Instrument, however finely it may be constructed and polished? The Inhabitant superior to its Mansion, however convenient and splendid? and yet shall these absorb every care

and attention, and the other remain totally unnoticed ?

The corporeal frame, destitute of vitality, consists of material principles only, whose properties are analogous to bodies in general. The identity of this body, were it possible that its identity should be preserved, is of no consequence whatever respecting the felicity of the soul. We might as well suppose, that the gem would lose its lustre and its value, were it to be placed in any other than in its pristine casket.

We may farther observe, that to expect the resurrection of exactly the same body, as that which was disorganized and dissolved by death, is to suppose that there is some specific or characteristic difference, in the constituent parts of every individual Body, by which it is naturally discriminated from others; but this is to diversify the same matter *ad infinitum*, without telling us in what that diversity consists: and yet, without this discrimination, the body of each individual soul cannot be identified. It is also not only possible, but certain, according to the transmutations that take place, in a series of years or of ages, that various particles of one body may become ingredients in the composition of subsequent bodies, by which Identities will be completely confounded.

Again. We are assured that there are "bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. So is the resurrection of the dead: it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." It is more than possible, therefore, that the same coarse materials may not be adequate to the purpose; and that others, whose properties are at present unknown, may be more adapted to the immortal vigour of the conscious principle. Should the same material substances be employed, we may imagine them to be so changed and refined, as not to be recognised. The only facts of importance are, that this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality; as he that raised up Jesus from the dead by his almighty power, will give it a body as shall please him.

Once more. The terms *sleep*, *resting* in the grave, &c. are perfectly applicable to one simple principle, in a state of inactivity and repose; but not in the least, to the divided and subdivided par-

ticles constituting the human body. Chemists well know the constituent parts of these; and they will acknowledge the incongruity of applying those terms either to the aqueous, acetous, oleaginous, or earthly particles, which compose the organized frame; or to the hydrogen, oxygen, and azote, which they deem to be the constituent principles of these. *

But what is a more authoritative evidence than the above mode of reasoning, is the simple and incontrovertible fact, that the Subjects, to whom the doctrine of the resurrection was preached by Jesus and his Apostles, could not possibly understand it in any other sense, than as being synonymous with the certainty of a *future state of existence.* It is well known, that the Sadducees believed in annihilation; and their dispute with our Saviour did not relate to the *possibility* of the seven husbands being clothed each with his own body, but about the *possibility* of their existing in a future state. Nor does our Saviour's answer refer to the corporeal frame, but to the identical man, when he argues, "as touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read how that it was spoken to you by God,

* See Note E.

saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the *Dead*," of those who are literally no more, but of those in whom the power of vitality is not extinct, and who shall again enjoy a conscious existence. Were they already in a state of conscious existence, he would still be, in the most important sense, the God of the living, although their bodies should rise no more.

When Paul was pleading his cause before the council at Jerusalem, perceiving that one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he availed himself of the contrariety of their opinions, concerning a future state, and he obtained a more favourable audience from the Pharisees, because their expectations, respecting futurity, were more correspondent with the grand object of Christianity, than those of the Sadducees; for "the Sadducees say, there is no resurrection, neither Angels nor Spirits." They denied the existence of all subordinate Beings, and therefore the dispute was not about the possibility of the material body being raised from the grave, to be reunited to the spiritual principle, already in existence,* but about future existence itself.

It is well known, that the philosophical notions both of Epicureans and Stoicks, lead them

* Acts xxiii. 6.

to deny a *future state of existence;* when therefore St. Paul preached before them at Athens, concerning Jesus and the *Resurrection*, they could not possibly suppose that this resurrection referred to a future reunion of the perishable body to the conscious existent spirit, whose existence they acknowledged; but that it gave the assurance, that the same principle of life and consciousness, which seemed to perish in death, shall be restored to vitality, with all its powers.

But these sentiments are confirmed, without the possibility of a reply, by the celebrated argument used by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, which we have already quoted. In this, he considers a Resurrection from the dead, as being synonymous with the existence of human beings in another state. If the Resurrection spoken of referred solely to the Body, the argument is irrelevant. The Beings existing in possession of their conscious powers, or who will live in another state immediately upon their quitting a tenement of clay, cannot be said to have fallen *asleep;* nor can they *perish*, though Christ should not be risen. And since good men would still be entitled to hope that a future will, to them, be a happy state of existence, they cannot be said to be of all men most miserable. But, if they suffer for the cause of Christ, and there be no future state, there can be no remune-

ration. Then is their faith vain, and they are yet in their sins ; that is, under the punishment of sin, which is Death, from which the Resurrection of Christ would have rescued them. The Apostle continues to argue, "if after the manner of men I have fought with the beasts at Ephesus, what advantage to me if the dead rise not. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." No expressions can be more clear and intelligible, if by resurrection we are to understand a revivification of the Man; or more inconclusive, if we refer them to the resurrection of the corporeal frame alone.

The Apostle, having shewn that the certainty of Christ's resurrection is the only foundation of the Christian's hope respecting futurity, he proceeds to answer an objection which, to his opponents, appeared insurmountable. They appealed to the testimony of the senses, in opposition to this doctrine of faith. When the component parts of the human frame have suffered a complete dissolution, each returning to its proper element, and assisting in the composition of other forms and relations of things, it is physically impossible that these parts should be readjusted into the same body; because they cannot be present in two places at once, or form the integrant parts of different bodies at the same time. The Apostle admits, that the objection

would have force, were their conceptions of human nature accurate ; but he proves that it does not confute the genuine doctrine of the Resurrection. He evinces the possibility of the vital principles being restored to consciousness and activity, by an argument drawn from analogy, in which the strength of the argument is increased by the disparity of the subjects. He asserts, that a process which takes place, and which every one admits to take place, although no one can explain the mode, obviates every objection that can be adduced against the resurrection of the human species. Some will say, "how are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come." How senseless the objection, says the Apostle, when, according to the common laws of vegetation, "the seed that is sown is not quickened," it lies in an inactive, dormant state, unless its various parts, composing the visible seed, die away, or become dissolved. The reviving principle, however, still exists, or it could not vegetate. In the process of this vegetation, "God gives it another body" from the surrounding elements, in place of that which has been destroyed ; according to the laws of his own ordination, and according to the nature and properties of the seed. It is obvious to the senses, that the earthly perishable parts of the seed, constituting its present ostensible body,

shall not be re-assembled. "The body that thou sowest *is not the body* that shall be." All that you *see*, is that which distinguishes one grain from another, as wheat, or any other grain, in its own specific form. But during its revivification, "God gives it *another* body, as it hath pleased him; and to every seed its own body." If then, after the seed has been thrown into the earth, there shall arise from that seed a plant, ramifying in numerous branches, and bearing fruit *sui generis;* if every germ or principle of existence, although invisible and unsearchable by mortals, contains within itself a power of regeneration, to an infinite extent, and is able to propagate existing substances in an endless progression, why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the Dead? that is, simply restore to each Individual his own individual existence with all his active powers? This is much more upon a level with our comprehension, than that complicated process, which we all observe to take place in the vegetable creation.*

Thus if we consider this important subject in its different points of view, and in its various connections, there is a manifest adaptation and correspondence of part to part. The condemnation consisting of Death, the repeal of the

* See Note F.

sentence must consist in a restoration to Life. As the conscious principle is the only principle which can experience happiness or misery, it is the only principle deserving our attention. Now we know, that that principle will not be annihilated, nor sleep the sleep of eternal death. Our attention is not once directed, to the union of the dissipated particles of matter, with spirits assembled from the regions of Bliss or Misery; but to those who are *asleep* in Jesus. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those which are *asleep;* that ye sorrow not, even as those who have no hope. For, if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which *sleep* in Jesus, will God bring with him."*

Should these principles require further confirmation, we might appeal to facts. The miraculous instances of a resurrection, recorded in the Scriptures, must have confuted our sentiments, had they not been true. The souls of the persons thus raised, must have been recalled from a state of conscious existence in bliss or misery; and they would certainly have given some interesting account to the wondering audience: for they must have been witnesses to scenes which could not have escaped their recollection, had they been in a state of consciousness.

* 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14, 15.

SECTION II.

On the important Ends obtained by the Death of Christ.

Although the death of Christ is considered by every Christian of the utmost consequence in the œconomy of Salvation, yet very different opinions are entertained concerning its precise efficacy; or in what particular manner that solemn event may be supposed to have operated for the benefit of a sinful world. We shall not deeply enter into the disputes of the different partizans of particular systems; but we will endeavour to collect all the material facts respecting it, as they are upon record; and arrange them in such a manner that it will not be difficult to bring these different opinions to a test which may establish or confute them.

It is agreed by all professors of Christianity, that its founder unjustly suffered an ignominious death:—that, after a life of exemplary piety and virtue, in which he invariably pleased his heavenly father, he was crucified, dead and

buried; that he rose again the third day, that he appeared in public, among his former disciples and many others; remained with them forty days, instructing them in the nature of his spiritual kingdom, and then ascended up to heaven.

It is agreed that he was a *perfect* character; and, consequently, he must have been exempt from that condemnation of death, to which every Sinner is inevitably exposed, according to the immutable laws of the moral governor of the world. He could not suffer death, therefore, as a punishment for his own sins, or submit to the penalty of the law, on account of his own transgressions.

His submission to death was a *voluntary act*. He says of himself, "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Therefore doth my father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."* "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you; greater love hath no man

* John x. 14.

than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

His own innocence, and legal exemption from the penalty of a law, which he had never violated, his obedience to the will of his heavenly father, and the compassion for the whole human race, manifested in that act of obedience, rendered this voluntary sacrifice of himself *peculiarly meritorious.* As St. Paul argues, "When we were without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly; for scarcely for a Righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure for a *good* man some would even dare to die; but God commandeth his love towards us, that while we were yet *Sinners,* Christ died for us."

This voluntary sacrifice of himself was peculiarly meritorious, because it was an unexampled submission to the will of God, in the most trying circumstances, and it was prompted by his love to mankind. The reward he sought was not human applause, but the approbation of his heavenly father, and the pleasure of doing essential good. The merit of the act was greatly enhanced by his *prescience* of the event with all its horrors. He was *determined* to submit to the pain and ignominy of a crucifixion. He foresaw the agonies attendant upon his dissolution, and

that he should be numbered with transgressors, or be treated as a public malefactor.

According to the appointment of heaven, his highly meritorious sufferings and death have revoked the sentence of condemnation from mankind. He died that we might *live*. He has abrogated the sentence, restored the human race to the possession of vitality, and has rendered that inconscious, inactive, and humiliated state of human nature, which might have terminated in total annihilation, a temporary suspension of the vital powers. He has converted it into a transient *sleep*.

Many and obvious are the advantages derived from the submission of our Saviour to the death of the cross. He presented his followers with an example of the most profound submission, in a case the most repugnant to all the feelings of human nature. This was an act of faith, an edifying act of faith in the promises of God, that it shall be well with the Righteous, amidst such sufferings and disgrace as naturally suggest the idea of an impossibility.

The calm firmness of his conduct before his judges, and the resolution with which he met the horrors of such a death, evinced the Inte-

grity of his character. They fully demonstrated to every man that he was not an *impostor*. They proved the *conviction* of his own mind, that he was himself the promised Messiah; that he really thought himself to be commissioned from above, to teach as no man had taught, and to act as no man had acted.

But he rose again. This every Christian believes. That he was really dead is as incontestible as that the malefactors were dead, who were crucified with him. For when the soldiers came and break the legs of the two malefactors, "they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, and they break not his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." This singular diversity in their conduct answered two very important purposes; it was the accomplishment of a prophecy; and had he been still alive, it would have been more effectual in expediting his death, than the means used with the malefactors; for the piercing of the pericardium, whence issued the blood and water, induced a wound which no being could possibly survive.

His Resurrection, on the third day after he was incontestibly murdered, was a *stupendous miracle*. It could alone be performed by the

power of the Almighty; and as the exemplary life and voluntary death of the risen Jesus, were proofs that he was not an *impostor;* his *Resurrection* demonstrates that he was not a *visionary enthusiast;* that, whatever he *believed* concerning himself and his God, was an important *reality.* His Resurrection proved also the *perfection* of his moral character. Hence was his soul not left in Hades, nor could the holy one see corruption. He was unjustly slain by wicked men, "but God hath raised him up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it," because perpetual death is the natural punishment of sin alone. It proved him to be a *true prophet;* for in the character of a shepherd he foretold that he should lay down his life for his sheep. When the unbelieving Jews demanded a sign of his mission, "Jesus answered, and said unto them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;" speaking of the temple of his body. Thus "was he declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead." By this miracle is proved the truth of Christianity; for no one has ever supposed that a God of truth would either sanction an imposition, which the impostor himself had planned for the good of mankind,

or affix the seal of truth to the fictions of a visionary.

The Resurrection of Christ demonstrated the *possibility* of *our* Resurrection. It was a complete answer, from *fact*, to all the doubts of scepticism, and the specious argumentations of presuming philosophy, and of that confidence in theory, which dared to limit the power of the Almighty.

It was also the *promise* of our Resurrection. It was an assurance that life shall be restored to the human race. He died that we might live. He rose again for our Justification; to shew that the sentence of death was repealed, that we shall once more be treated as the sons of God, and be received into the family of heaven. "Because he lives we shall live also." "He is the first fruits of them that sleep."

His Resurrection revived the desponding spirits of his disciples, and confirmed their faith in him, as the promised Messiah. They were now convinced that "this was he, in whom they had trusted, that he would redeem Israel." His sojourn among them so many days, evinced that they were not deluded by a phantom; and it afforded them an opportunity of being fully instructed in the nature and object of his spiritual kingdom.

After he had thus accomplished these objects of his mission, he ascended into heaven. This was a corroborating proof, to the astonished multitude, that he was the sent of God. Previous to his death he had foretold this event also to his disciples, and shewed the necessity of it. "In my father's house (says he) there are many mansions. If it had not been so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also."

He farther assures us, that his ascension to heaven was necessary for another important purpose. In his affectionate address to his disciples, upon the prospect of his death, he tells them, "I will pray to the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him. But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. The comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said to you. When the comforter is come, whom I shall send unto you, from the father, even the spirit of truth, which proceeds from the father, he shall testify of me. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is

expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the comforter will not come ; but if I depart I will send him to you."*

We shall not attempt a particular explanation of these obscure passages. It is sufficient for us to know, that it was the object of our Saviour to console his disciples, by the assurances, that when they should be deprived of his visible presence and social intercourse, they should not be left without assistance, support, and consolation ; —that a divine influence should accompany them in their work, and in their trials ;—that the cause of Christianity, which he came to establish, and to seal with his blood, was a progressive cause, which would require, and should obtain the divine aid, through every period of its progress :—that this peculiar aid was not necessary during his abode with them ; but that it should supply his absence;—and that the strength of the sincere Christian, shall at every period be equal to his day.

There are other points of view which present themselves, by attending to the conformity of the methods displayed in the revelation of God,

* John, ch. xiv.

to the transactions of men, and comparing them with the moral principles conspicuous in the nature of man.

The terms Mediator, Intercessor, Advocate, are frequently applied to our Saviour, by the apostolic writers. "There is one God," says St. Paul, in his instructions to Timothy, "and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." He is said to be "the Mediator of a new covenant." "If any man sins," says the Apostle John, we "have an Advocate with the Father, Christ the Righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." "He is able to save them to the uttermost," says the writer to the Hebrews, "that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make *intercession* for them."

In human transactions, it is usual to employ some intermediate person to promote a reconciliation between discordant parties. This Mediator is necessarily supposed to be exempt from culpability, respecting the subject in debate. He is also supposed to be impartial, to be a friend to each, and desirous of possessing the friendship of each, by his kind interference. Where great offences have been committed, which are calculated to excite strong resentments, such

an Intermediate is disposed to act as an Advocate and Intercessor, in favour of the offending party; employing every argument which justice will permit, and benevolence may suggest, to make a conciliatory impression upon the mind of the injured. As a Friend he is listened to with attention and respect; and if he solicit reconciliation as a *favour conferred upon himself*, *he* has a claim to attention, to which the *offender* cannot possibly make pretensions.

This office is peculiarly honourable. It can only be undertaken by those who possess benevolent and compassionate dispositions. It promotes and strengthens the social virtues. It inspires gratitude into the breast of the transgressor, and calls forth the love and admiration of the injured friend. The merits of this interference are greatly enhanced where much pains have been taken, and sacrifices have been made, in order to accomplish the benevolent purposes. Such an intermediation is a lesson of humility to the offender. It holds him trembling at a distance, by the very act which facilitates his approach.

We may farther remark, that it is frequently deemed a maxim of prudence, in a mind possessing warm benevolence, to render reconciliation apparently difficult; and to impute its

immediate success to the interference of a friend. This has a natural tendency to render the adverse party more cautious in the future. Benefits too easily conferred, are seldom estimated according to their value ; but the most obdurate transgressor, would perceive that reiterated offences, are insults committed against the person principally offended, and his friendly Mediator.

The Being whom all men have offended, cannot be moved by intreaties, nor can his eternal purposes be changed. He it was that sought reconciliation. It was his own act to send his only begotten Son to be a propitiation for our sins. Yet in his conduct towards his moral offspring, he represents himself as conforming to the principles and dispositions of human agency; by way of accommodation to the weakness of our perceptions, and to produce a more impressive effect upon our minds. The universal Father, while he was determined to shew mercy, was determined also to check presumption. He appointed an Intermediate, in whose virtues he had perfect complacency, and whose benevolent desires will always be accomplished. Jesus assures his disciples, " I do always those things that please him." In his address to his Father, when he was about to recall

Lazarus from his inconscious state, he said, "I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always." We may therefore rest assured, when he prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," that their pardon is sealed. The more implicit his obedience, the greater his sufferings, the deeper his disgrace, the more meritorious was he in the eyes of his heavenly Father, who expects that he should appear meritorious in our eyes; and that we should view, as in a mirror, his detestation of those sins, which, as the Father of Mercies, he has promised to forgive.

We are informed that the resolute faith of Abraham, which prepared him to offer up his own son, in obedience to the divine command, was peculiarly acceptable to God; who knows the strength of those parental affections which he has himself planted within the human breast; and who, in accommodation to our natural feelings, is represented as possessing them. The favourite language of the Gospel is, "God *so loved* the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Apostle Paul argues, he that *spared not* his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Such expres-

sions suggest to our minds, the union of a *reluctance* and a *determination.* They are intended to warn us of our extreme danger, by the value of the remedy. They manifest, at the same time, the paternal affection of the great Father of all, towards the perfect mediator appointed, and towards his *offending* offspring.

We attempted, in a former disquisition,* to explain the nature and boundaries of that kind of imputation, by which the moral characters of the good and virtuous, render them the mediums of conferring blessings, upon those who have no characteristic merit of their own. Signal honours have thus been frequently conferred, by him who loveth righteousness, upon the Conscientious and Worthy. They have been selected from others, to convey important blessings to the less deserving. We remarked that the family of Noah was chosen to renovate the world, "because Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation:" that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah would have been spared at the intercession of the righteous Lot, had they not passed the bounds of reformation. It was through his faith and piety that Abraham

* See Disq. on Jew. Dis. ch. III. § 1.

obtained the promise, that "in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed."

Of all these men the merit was partial, merely comparative, and the characters were imperfect. They flourished in ages of great degeneracy; but they preserved themselves from the grosser vices of their day, and they found favour with God, even for their imperfect virtues. The Piety of Moses, in union with his intellectual acquirements, qualified him to be a leader of the chosen people from Egypt to the land of Canaan; and he is frequently represented as interceding for that perverse nation, when they had incurred the divine displeasure, although his own imperfections rendered him unworthy to enter himself into the land of Promise. Our advocate with the Father is Jesus Christ the Righteous, in whom the Father was always well pleased. As his superlative merits were once prevalent, they must always be prevalent; and thus may it be said, that he ever lives to make intercession. The other Intermediates, were honoured for their conditional and comparative merits. In him were united the *absolute* merit of perfect obedience, and perfection of character; the *conditional* merit of completing the work which his Father sent him to do, which entitled him to the great recompense of

reward; and respecting *comparative* merit, as he was without sin, not one of the other sons of Adam could be compared with him. The advantages they procured for the undeserving were many and great; but they were transient. The advantages procured by this last Mediator between God and Man are durable as our existence; and this he has rendered eternal.

Once more; God in his relative character, frequently condescends to represent himself as entering into a covenant with his rational offspring. This is manifested in each dispensation, and it is so frequently declared in the divine oracles, that these dispensations themselves are represented in light of *testaments*, *covenants*, containing conditions or articles of agreement to be respected by the parties engaged or concerned. Under the first dispensation, the Deity is represented as promising to to confer immortality upon Adam and his posterity, upon condition of their obedience to his commands. "This do and ye shall live," was the tenour of the covenant. They have disobeyed, and of consequence forfeited the stipulated blessing. After the destruction of the degenerate race of man by the flood, in order to appease the alarm and consternation which such an event must have excited among the children of Noah, and the recent inhabitants of

the earth, God gave unto them a token of security. "God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, I, behold I, establish my Covenant with you, and with your seed after you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more, by the waters of a flood. This is the token of the Covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a token of a Covenant between me and the earth."* When God promised to Abraham "I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and I will establish my Covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations for an everlasting Covenant," he enjoined upon him and upon his posterity, the rite of circumcision, as a condition of their claim to the Covenant. His promises to the Israelites of national prosperity, upon condition of their obedience to his laws, are termed Covenants. Similar language, and similar engagements, are so frequent in the Old Testament, that it would be tedious and unnecessary to enter into farther particulars.

Human transactions, covenants or solemn

* See Gen. ch. ix.

engagements between parties were, in ancient times, usually ratified by sacrifices. Beasts were slain upon the altar, and the contractors went between the parts of the sacrifice, as an implication, that the violator of the treaty would acknowledge himself to be deserving of death. The numerous sacrifices appointed in the Jewish religion, were manifestly ordained as the Tokens of a covenant. The promise of God was that their errors and imperfections should be forgiven, upon the condition of their performance of certain rites, in token of their guilt and penitence. Those numerous sacrifices were enjoined, that the Israelites might be impressed with a sense of their numerous transgressions; and they were diversified in value and solemnity, according to the gradations of immorality in the offence. Of these facts instances have been given under a former disquisition.* All the sacrifices which were enforced on account of transgressions, were considered as solemn acts of atonement; for, if they were performed precisely according to the manner appointed, they were graciously accepted, and the particular offence was considered as obliterated.

Such were the conditions and tokens of the ancient Covenants.

* See Disquisition on the Jewish Dispensation, p. 184.

Under the Christian dispensation, the Deity represents himself as making new, and infinitely more favourable, engagements with his offending creatures. These engagements are introduced, and they are ratified by the Saviour of the world. "He is the mediator of a new, and a better Covenant." The conditions proposed by him who seeks reconciliation are, that they shall believe in the divine mission of his son, Jesus Christ, repent of their sins, and return to the paths of duty; and he engages, in a solemn Covenant, to pardon their offences, to adopt them as sons, and to give them the inheritance of eternal life.

According to the language of the Gospel, these conditions and the promises are represented in the character of a *Testament*. This term appears to be synonymous with a Covenant, but there is a marked distinction of no small importance. Covenant simply expresses the agreement itself; Testament has also a reference to the Earnest deposited; a token by which the covenant is ratified. Testament signifies also a WILL, or that solemn act by which a person, under the prospect of death, disposes of his property; the different articles of which are to be executed after his demise. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has adopted this idea. He observes, that "where a Testament is, there must also,

of necessity, be the death of the Testator. For a Testament is of force after men are dead, otherways, it is now nothing at all while the Testator lives." But Jesus did not die according to the usual course of nature. He died a violent death, to which he submitted voluntarily, that he might rescue a guilty world from the condemnation of death, and become the medium of their salvation. The same Apostle observes, "for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of transgressors, that were under the first Testament, they which are called, might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." In various other passages of this Epistle is the death of Christ placed in the same point of view.*

These representations correspond with the expressions uttered by our Saviour, at his last supper with the Disciples. "As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the Disciples, and said, take eat, this is my body; and he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."†

* See Heb. ix. 15; Psalm xii. 24. xiii. 20.

† Mat. xxvi. 26.

The new Covenant, therefore, being rendered efficient by the death of the Son of God, we are presented with a promise, and a ratification. He, who, in his transactions with the children of men, has so frequently represented himself as being actuated by their principles, has condescended to give this great pledge of his paternal affection for the whole human race, and complacential acceptance of the penitent. When God so loved the world as to give his own son for its redemption, no one can rationally doubt of his conciliatory disposition. He has *demonstrated* his willingness to bestow every other blessing. For as the Apostle argues, " he that *spared not* his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us all things ?"

Thus have we attempted to investigate, with all the precision in our power, the nature of the mediatorial office of Christ, and the great benefits accruing from it, to the offending offspring of heaven. The result of our enquiry is, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of mankind from the condemnation and punishment of eternal death ;—that he hath changed a total extinction of Being, which every one must acknowedge to be an equitable punishment of sin, into

a temporary repose in the regions of the dead ;—that he has purchased a right to this distinguished honour, by the perfection of his moral character, by his unmerited sufferings, by his voluntary submission to death, to an *ignominious* death, although, according to the moral constitution of God, death had no natural power over him; for he had not forfeited his natural claim to immortality as the Son of God, by any act of disobedience ;—that the death of this righteous person was permitted, and appointed, by his heavenly complacential Father, on account of the beneficial purposes to be answered by it, in favour of his *offending* offspring. He was thus an example of perfect obedience, in circumstances the most severe and humiliating. He died that he might rise again. By his Death, he bore witness to his own sincerity, in declaring himself to be Son of God ; and by his Resurrection, his heavenly Father bore witness to the truth of his assertions. He died that *we* might live, that the sentence of condemnation might be repealed :—He bore witness to the possibility of a resurrection from the dead, in opposition to every physical appearance ; and he became the first fruits of them that sleep. By his Death he set a seal upon the new Covenant of Grace ; by his Resurrection he proved that the Covenant was

ratified in heaven; that God accepted of his services, and acknowledged him to be the medium of that salvation to be conferred upon a guilty race; according to which Covenant, pardon is ensured to every sincere penitent; and a restoration to all those blessings which a reconciled parent possesses the power of bestowing.

These positions, which appear to us in no other light than as a simple statement of facts, will enable us to comprehend the nature of Justification, and of Justification by Faith, as represented in the apostolic epistles, concerning which so many volumes have been written; as also the propriety of those peculiar expressions by which the different Apostles designate the Saviour of the world, in distinction from every other messenger of God.

Essential errors in first principles, naturally and necessarily lead to erroneous inferences; and it is in vain that hypothetic notions will be assumed, in order to give the desired consistency to any particular theory. If the basis be an arbitrary assumption, instead of an evident fact, every hypothesis which we may attempt to erect upon it, must be visionary; and of consequence, the more minutely it is examined, the

more objectionable it will appear. The principles we have advanced appear to us to be strictly scriptural. They are also fully competent to explain all those passages in the sacred writings, and particularly in the writings of St. Paul, which have been the subjects of so much controversy, without our being obliged to have recourse to arbitrary assumptions on the one hand, or, on the other, to give what has the appearance of a distorted interpretation to the particular phraseology employed.

St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, has written more copiously on the subject of Justification, than any other of the Apostles. He attempts, in his Epistle to the Romans, and in that to the Galatians, to confute the erroneous notions which already began to disgrace Christianity; and he indignantly expostulates with those converts, both Jews or Gentiles, who expected acceptance with God, by corrupting the gospel of his Son, or by enjoining upon its professors, the observance of rituals, which were no longer obligatory upon the descendants of Abraham, and which were unknown to the Gentile world. He minutely states the distinction between the ancient Covenant, which he terms the covenant of *works*, and the new Covenant, or that of *Grace;* and he asserts, that the

latter has happily annulled the former. The language of the first Covenant, that of works, is, "this do and ye shall live." Be ye perfect in your obedience, and ye shall be entitled to the inheritance of sons. But the universal law of nature is, "every soul that sinneth shall die." The transgressor can have no title to immortality, and he becomes subjected to the penalty of death.

In his Epistle to the Gentile converts resident in Rome, he proves, that all mankind are "by nature in this state of condemnation," "for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;" and he paints, in lively colours, the universal depravity of mankind, which has involved them indiscriminately in the condemnation of death; so that "by the deeds of the law, no flesh living can be justified." For as they had transgressed every precept, they could not contemplate the law of God without a conviction of guilt, and a dread of its penalty: "by the law is the knowledge of sin." He proceeds to state the method of justification according to the covenant of grace. We shall transcribe a passage in his Epistle to the Romans, which states the doctrine in a more ample manner than in any other part of his writings; and upon this we

shall comment, in a manner correspondent with the principles advanced above. If these principles serve to elucidate the arguments of the Apostle, or if there be a more obvious coincidence between them and the favourite expressions of the Apostle, than is to be observed in any of the tenets which are usually adopted, the circumstance will become a corroboration of their truth.

Rom. ch. iii. 19, 20. " Now we know, that what things so ever the law saith, it saith to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God; therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin;—verse 21, 23, but now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;—v. 24, 25, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the

forbearance of God ;—v. 26, to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law."

As thoughts are chiefly communicated by words, it is necessary that the most accurate conceptions should be formed of the precise signification of the words employed. In complex terms, the true signification can only be known by their peculiar adaptation to the subject under consideration. St. Paul himself, whose language has been frequently misunderstood,—or there could not have been a diversity of opinions about it, observes, "that even things without life, giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in sound, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?"

We shall, therefore, examine into the precise meaning of every essential term, separately, that

we may ascertain its importance in its connected state.

It is universally known, that a Law is a rule of conduct. When it is prescribed to an inferior whom a superior has a right to command, it is the rule of *Obedience.* The law of a perfect Being demands implicit obedience, for there can be no opposition of duties, arising from contrary obligations to different masters. When the Apostle speaks of this grand universal law of obedience, he applies it sometimes to the obligations which arise from the law of nature; which are soon perceived by a reflecting mind, upon the earliest dawn of reason;—sometimes to the moral law, which was fully revealed to the Jews;—and sometimes to ceremonial ordinances, such as the ordinance of circumcision, or any other ritual, which was expressly enjoined upon the Jewish people, to answer important purposes, although they were of a temporary nature. Thus does he argue both with Jews and Gentiles upon their own principles. For as God hath an undoubted right to *command,* all his subjects, indiscriminately, are under obligations to *obey.* Every offence incurs guilt, and exposes to the legal punishment; and the claims which are due to perfect obedience are equally forfeited, whether the injunction be of a moral or ceremonial nature.

The terms *justified, just, justifier;* and also *righteous, righteousness, righteousness of God,* &c. which are so frequently used by the Apostle, convey, in the currency of the English language, different significations from those which are uniformly annexed to them in the original Greek. We are accustomed to consider the word to *justify,* as being synonymous with to *vindicate* from a particular accusation; and the *justifier,* as the advocate who pleads the cause of the accused. By *righteousness,* we are prone to understand the perfection of a moral character in general. But by such applications, the primitive significations of the words are placed at a considerable distance from each other; so that their natural connection with themselves, and their subject, is destroyed. All these terms are derived from the same origin; and they invariably relate to a *just decision,* in a judicial process.* Consequently, they are equally applicable to the *condemnation* of the guilty, and the *vindication* of the innocent, or to an honourable *acquittal* from the charges which have been brought against him. Nor do they exclude a *free pardon,* or *mitigation* of the legal punishment, where the charge may have been substantiated. All these may be *righteous* judg-

* See Note G.

ments. The first, places before the eyes of the offender, and of the public, the law, the transgression, and the penalty. The other, evinces that neither the offence nor the penalty, are applicable to the accused. His innocence has been proved, and strict justice demands that he should be acquitted. In the remission of the punishment, or mitigation of the penalty of the law, the decisions of equity consist in pronouncing the offender to be guilty; by which a very important distinction is inviolably preserved, between the guilty and the innocent. The law is protected, and the offender disgraced. His demerits and his danger are publicly made known. But such a discovery cannot be a total impediment to the exercise of mercy. If it were, mercy would cease to have an existence. Wherever the detection of guilt, and immediate exposure to severe sufferings, inspire the offender with anguish and contrition, they also inspire a disposition in every benevolent mind, to soften the rigours of the law, if circumstances will permit; nor does such a mind apprehend that it will offend justice, either by the remission or the mitigation of the penalty, as prudence may dictate. By this constitution of our nature, we are rendered the guardians, both of justice and of clemency. We resent the

offence, but we pity the offender. Nor is this right relinquished in the establishment of civil governments. A mercy-seat is always placed somewhere. Provision is always made for occasional acts of grace. Nay, the most cruel tyrant claims to himself the right of shewing mercy, when he pleases. Were any of his subjects to litigate this privilege, they would be in danger of suffering for the insult. In cases of this kind, all that the principles of wisdom and justice require, is, that in the mode of exercising mercy, the criminal should be encouraged to reform, and not repeat his crimes ; and that his fellow-subjects should be discouraged from imitating his wicked example. Where penitence is sincere, and there are sanguine hopes of reformation, although the offender has not been justified, according to the stricter sense of the word, mercy will freely consent that he shall, in the future, be treated as if he had been justified. His former offences shall no longer exclude him from the privileges common to inoffensive citizens.

If these explanations be admitted, they will, in their connection with the principles advanced in the preceding section, place the argument of the Apostle, respecting the nature of justifica-

tion, in a very conspicuous point of view. It will stand thus:

Verses 19, 20. "Now we know that the injunctions of every law are binding upon the subjects of the law: but as the laws of God have never been perfectly obeyed, by his subjects and moral offspring, no one can plead his innocence. The whole human race is guilty in the sight of God. Therefore, as no one can plead his innocence, he cannot claim a right to a legal acquittal. He cannot be justified by that which condemns him. For it is by the commands and the penalties of the law that the offender is made acquainted with the nature of the offence, and the penalty which is due to it."

Verses 21, 22, 23. "But now, according to the covenant of grace, the righteous judgment, decision, or determination, of the Supreme Legislator, is manifested by an act of clemency. He no longer demands a perfect obedience to the law, as a condition of being favourably received; and thus is the law abolished, considered as a Covenant. This change in the divine proceedings, and these designs of mercy, were not totally hid from the ancient people of God under the law: but were frequently foretold by the Prophets, even his righteous determination

to require faith in Jesus Christ as the condition of acceptance; and to pardon all, indiscriminately, who shall confess with their mouths, the Lord Jesus, and believe in their hearts that God hath raised him from the dead. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile; for all have sinned, they have all dishonoured the Divine Laws and the Divine Legislator."

Verses 24, 25. "Thus, although they are found guilty, they are absolved from the penalty of their guilt; they are freely acquitted by an act of grace; and for this acquittal, this absolution, they are indebted to the Saviour of the world, whom God, his Father and their Father, has appointed to publish his propitious designs, and to be the medium of their execution. He died for their sins, and by this acceptable act, has he redeemed them from a state of everlasting condemnation. He is entitled to that 'faith in him which worketh by love, and will enable them to overcome the world.'"

Verse 26. "Thus hath God manifested his equitable plans of mercy. He is strictly just in all his decisions, rewarding the distinguished merits of his Son, whom he raised from the dead, and appointed to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sin; and he acquits the criminal who receives, and who yields to the Saviour

the obedience of faith. In this manner he testifies his abhorrence of sin, and his compassion for the offender.

Verse 27. Boasting must, therefore, be for ever excluded, not by the law of works, or by a perfect obedience to the divine commands; but by this act of faith, which testifies both guilt and contrition.

Verses 28, 29, 30. It is, therefore, evident, that our acceptance with God is through the medium of faith, and not from our own merits, or personal righteousness. It is also evident, that this clemency is not confined to his ancient people the Jews. He now declares himself to be the universal father, and seeks reconciliation with all his offending children, whether Jews or Gentiles. He is equally the God of all. He now demands the same conditions from those who were under the ancient covenant, of which circumcision was the token, and those who were not partakers of that covenant. The first are freed from the condemnatory law of works by an act of faith, and the latter will be equally accepted through the same means.

Verse 31. Although we deny that a man can be saved by the works of the law, we by no means make it void. The conviction of guilt demonstrates that the law has been universally

dishonoured; nor are the offenders totally exempted from the punishment denounced. The punishment of sin is death, and death will pass upon all men; but the mitigation of the sentence consists in its not being eternal. Thus is the penalty itself in some degree established, but not to the extent which the severity of justice would vindicate. The sin and misery which are induced upon the whole human race, by violating the perfect law of God, demonstrate that its injunctions cannot be dispensed with. It is still the rule of action, and conformity to its dictates can alone qualify for the inheritance prepared for the Children of God. "For without holiness no man can see the Lord."

The Apostle proceeds, in the following chapter, to prove, that faith in Christ is not a requisition perfectly new. Faith has, at every period, been acceptable to God; but under the gospel dispensation it respects a new object. The principle upon which this requisition is founded, is obvious. Next to the *perfection* of obedience, every one esteems and values the *disposition* to obey. Where there cannot be an absolute claim of *right* to the complacential *affections* of another, the disposition most acceptable is an *humble confidence* in his *benignity;* and wherever a

promise has been made, to distrust, will be deemed a reflection upon his character. This is the case in all our social intercourse; it is particularly the case in the parental and filial relation. The parent knows that were he to lose the confidence of his son, respecting ability or disposition, he would inevitably lose the power of being of essential service to him. The supreme Parent requires the same dispositions from his offspring, and for the same reason. Numberless are the instances upon record, where he manifests the highest complacency in those who manifest a confidence in his government, and in his promises; and where distrust and unbelief receive the indications of his displeasure; sometimes in severe reprehensions, and at others in the most benignant expostulations.

These being the principles in our nature, and such being the conduct of God, it is not difficult to follow the Apostle's train of reasoning, when he expatiates upon the faith of Abraham, as illustrative of his doctrine. He shews that, next to complacency in his beloved Son, in whom he is always well pleased, the universal Father hath complacency in those who manifest a disposition to obey him, and place their confidence in him, under circumstances the most unfavourable in their appearance. The Apostle states, that even

the righteous and faithful Abraham, whose conduct was so acceptable to God, was not acceptable from the *perfection* of his character, but from his *disposition* to believe and obey. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and this was imputed to him for righteousness. ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσυνην. It was accounted unto him to his justification." The Apostle adds, "now it was not written for his sake alone, that (his faith) was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," or as an evidence of our acquittal from the condemnation of death.

In our chapter on the filial confidence of Sons, we attempted to analyse the general nature of faith, and to shew the necessity of faith in Christ, both to form the Christian character, and to be entitled to the blessings of Christianity. Further enlargement will, therefore, be unnecessary, as those principles are perfectly applicable to the present subject.

The peculiar terms, *Sanctifier*, *Redeemer*, *Propitiator*, which have been applied to Christ, exclusively; the expressions, "we have redemption through his blood;" "he has washed us from our sin in his own blood;" "he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" "he was once offered to bear the sins of many;" "ye are bought with a price;" "ye know that ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot," &c. &c. admit of an easy solution, according to the above representation given of the mediatorial office of Christ. He is our sanctifier by the purity of his precepts, his perfect example, and the animating motives he has placed before us, to practise holiness in the fear of the Lord. He has redeemed us from the condemnation of eternal death, by his dying for our sakes. He who knew no sin was treated as a sinner, that we might be reconciled to God, and receive the justification which is by faith.

The terms *bought*, *purchased*, *redeemed*, are more frequently used by the Apostles, and particularly by St. Paul, than any others. They are sometimes applied to liberation from sin. Thus St. Peter says, "Ye are not redeemed *from your*

vain conversation with corruptible things," &c. &c. St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free man; likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant;" "ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men." At other times, they refer to the liberation of the human race from a state of condemnation; being redeemed from the curse of the law, which is the condemnation of death. These are obviously metaphorical expressions, taken from the redemption of captives by costly presents, or at a stipulated price. According to the ancient customs of uncivilized nations, prisoners were never liberated spontaneously, from the principles of humanity. When the uncultivated mind was solely governed by its passions, revenge was considered as the first of duties to injured self, family, and connections. The gratuitous remission of punishment was considered as a species of injustice, or a mark of pusillanimity; or as seeking to soothe the anger of the adverse party, by a timid concession of rights. These severe principles were subsequently relaxed into a more profitable kind of self-interest, by receiving a stipulated price of redemption. The frequent application of the term to such specific purposes, finally rendered it synonymous with liberation,

remission of punishment, without a reference to the particular mode. The divine Being is frequently, in the Old Testament, described as the Redeemer of his people. "Fear not thou worm, Jacob, and ye men of Israel, I will help you, saith the Lord as thy Redeemer, the holy one of Israel."* These, and similar expressions may be considered as having a triumphant reference to the customs of the surrounding heathens, who were frequently compelled to submit to the exorbitant demands of their conquerors, as the price of redemption; whereas the Lord Jehovah was the Redeemer of Israel, who saved them by his Almighty power, and to whom no compensation could be made.

But the term may be applied to our Saviour in his mediatorial character, with strict propriety. His death was virtually the purchase of our resurrection to everlasting life. It was, as it were, the price of our redemption. He died that we might live. If that event had not taken place, we should have continued in a state of condemnation; we were yet in our sins.

It is a peculiarity worthy of our notice, that the terms *sacrifice*, *sacrificed*, *offering*, *offered*,

* Isaiah xli. 14.

have, in the writings of the New Testament, so seldom a reference to the death of Christ; and if we admit that Saint Paul is the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, such a reference is made by him *alone*. He exhorts the Ephesians to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour."* He exhorts the Corinthians, "purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."† "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," the Apostle writes to the Hebrews;‡ and again, "by the which Will ye are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all."§

The terms Sacrifice, Offering, have a general import. They are most properly applied to whatever is consecrated or devoted to a religious purpose. St. Paul, acknowledging the gifts which he had received from the Philippians, by the hands of Epaphroditus, which administered to the wants to which he had been exposed in the course of his ministry, terms them "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."‖ Testifying his love to them, he says,

* Eph. v. 2. † 1. Cor. v. 7. ‡ Heb. ix. 28. § Heb. x. 10.
‖ Phil. iv. 18.

"Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all."* Towards the close of his ministry, and foreseeing his approaching death, he writes to Timothy: "for I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." In his Epistle to the Romans, he applies the doctrine of faith, concerning which he had so amply discoursed, to the following pious and moral purposes: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God."† He applies the observations on the superiority of the sacrifice of Christ, to those instituted by the law of Moses, which pervade the whole Epistle to the Hebrews, in the following manner: "By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name; but to do good and communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."‡

This singular Epistle to the Hebrews is re-

* Phil. ii. 17. † Rom. xiii. 1, 2. ‡ Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

plete with references to the Jewish ceremonies, and to the minute circumstances attendant upon them. The grand design, which pervades the whole, is to impress upon the minds of the Hebrews, a deep sense of the superiority of the sacrifice which the Son of God has made of himself, in its object, extent, and effects, to all those which had been instituted under the former dispensation; or that were offered in the remotest periods of antiquity. He has not specified the precise manner in which these offerings were rendered acceptable, on the numerous occasions for which they were appointed. His design is to manifest the insufficiency of each sacrifice, to answer a permanent purpose; in which they differed essentially from that sacrifice which Christ has made of himself, for the benefit of all mankind. Temporal calamities were the sole threats and the sole punishments under the law, and it was always in the power of the people to avert them, by repentance, of which the sacrifice of animals slain, or of burnt offerings, were the constituted emblems. Annual sacrifices were made with great solemnity, for the sins of the people at large; and occasional sacrifices, at peculiar periods, were for particular offences; and these, as we have shewn in a former disquisition, were very different, both

in value, and the solemnities prescribed, according to the degrees of moral culpability in the offender. The beneficial effects of all these sacrifices were transient. "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again of sins every year. For it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should finally, or effectually, take away sin," or avert, for a continuance, its merited punishment. Their temporary effect is described by their "sanctifying to the purifying of the flesh;" without their deeply and permanently influencing the heart, producing a lasting reformation. But the free oblation which Christ has made of himself, for the good of the world, has removed the grand, the universal, punishment, the condemnation of death; and thus are we "sanctified," or treated as if we were holy, "through the offering of the body of Christ, once for all." "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering, oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." The important work is finished; "there remaineth no farther sacrifice for sin." "Christ is not entered into the holy place of the temple, made with hands, which are figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence

of God for us." "Not that he should often offer himself, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year, with strange blood," or the blood of animals, "for then he must have suffered since the foundation of the world;" but now, and finally, "at the termination of the periods, νυν δε απαξ ἐπι συντελεια τῶν αιωνῶν, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, &c. &c.*

The particular phraseology, by which the mission of Jesus has been distinguished, and the great importance which is uniformly ascribed to his death, have introduced a doctrine into the Christian system, which is denominated the doctrine of the *Atonement*. The opinions advanced under this term, have been considered by their partisans as of the utmost importance, constituting the *vitals* of Christianity; and those who have refused to adopt them have been placed out of the pale of the Church. But all the principles advanced, and the manner in which they have been both attacked and defended, have equally been founded upon the supposition, that the punishment denounced against sin, has invariably a reference to the *future state of the wicked*. When the advocates for the doctrine contend, that the infinite merits of the

* See Heb. ix.

Saviour, his sufferings and death, have appeased the divine wrath, or satisfied the demands of infinite justice, our attention is always directed to the *redemption from eternal misery.* This is the doctrine to which their opponents so strenuously object. They cannot reconcile it to the justice of the sternest lawgiver, much less to the benignity of an affectionate parent, to inflict so tremendous a punishment, upon the sins which were committed in the days of the deepest ignorance; nor can they conceive it to be possible, that the death of Christ, although it was a voluntary submission to the laws of humanity, should possess such an infinitude of merit as to satisfy infinite justice, according to the ideas which are annexed to the terms *satisfaction, infinite justice,* and *infinite demerit of sin.*

But the whole of the controversy being founded upon an *assumption,* that the punishment denounced in the Old Testament against sin, had a reference to a future life of misery, those of our readers who shall admit the statement we have made from a series of scriptural facts, and the inferences we have drawn, will also admit, that if the controversy be not entirely dissolved, it must take a different turn, and that its importance will be very considerably diminished. If the natural punishment of sin

be eternal death, and the human race be absolved from this punishment, through the highly meritorious intervention and voluntary death of the Saviour, the grand object is secured, to the joy and consolation of every sincere Christian, notwithstanding the minuter differences which may still subsist, concerning the precise mode in which the blessing may have been obtained. Whoever believeth in him hath life and immortality. He died, that they might live; because he lives, they will live also, although they may miscalculate concerning the precise ratio of merit in the benevolent agent, and of demerit in the subject. If by his stripes we are healed, we may surely avoid censorious quarrels, about the particular manner in which the effect is produced.*

We shall, therefore, close the subject simply by observing, that if our statements be received, the favourite expression that *Christ suffered in our stead*, is not applicable, to the extent of its meaning. He suffered, to redeem us from the condemnation of eternal death; but he hath not suffered eternal death for us. He hath redeemed us from prison, without being constituted a prisoner in our stead, for death could have no dominion over him. Nor is the human

* See Note H.

race totally exempt from the whole curse of the law, for it is still appointed unto all men once to die. Death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned; and our apprehensions and alarms concerning death still constitute a large portion of human misery. But he has mitigated the great severity of the sentence; he hath rendered the punishment of a *temporary* nature. To the faithful, death is converted into a *sleep*, and they expect to awake to a state of permanent bliss.

SECTION III.

Enquiry into the purposes for which a redemption from the penalty of death has been obtained.

"SINCE by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."* "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."† Thus, although the whole human race shall be restored to vitality, they will not all

* 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. † 2 Cor. v. 10.

take possession of an eternal inheritance, as the adopted sons of God.

However great the privilege of being restored to life, it is not in itself a restoration to happiness; it solely presents us with an opportunity to prepare for happiness. We have already learned by experience that life and felicity are not synonymous. There are many other requisites besides that of simple existence, although it is so essential to the possession of these. Happiness can alone be the result of an union, or a concordance between the various means and sources of good, and the state of our minds respecting them. It demands personal qualifications and social dispositions, corresponded to our situation in existence. It demands the due exercise of every faculty, the direction and regulation of every propensity, which hath a relation to things around us, and which must harmonize with them. The science of Ethics demonstrates to us, that rational beings cannot possess *well being*, without the love and practice of virtue, nor *complete felicity*, without the perfection of virtue and piety. Light is soon for the *righteous* only, and gladness for the *upright in heart*. As Individuals we must live soberly, righteously, and godly, in whatever world we may be placed; as social beings we must love

each other with a pure heart, without dissembling, or there can be no perfect harmony; and as children of our heavenly father we must love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our strength, and with all our minds." The love of all that is good and excellent is essential to felicity, in every situation. Love is the only fulfilment of the law, securing an universal and unwearied attention to every duty, and being, in its own nature, an inward source of permanent delight. Love to God, the universal parent; love to his offspring, manifested by unremitted attention to their interests; delight in the pursuit of every thing which can improve our nature, exalt our faculties, and augment their powers of enjoyment. These are requisites to render existence a blessing; and, without these, immortality itself would prove an everlasting curse.

Although the great captain of our salvation has conquered death and the grave, he has not yet conquered sin and misery. He has, however, done great things for us . He has also enabled us to do much for ourselves. He has given us such precepts, set before us such an example, animated us with such prospects, and promised such assistance, that, by proper exertions on our parts, universal righteousness may

prevail, and then misery will be no more. He hath purchased for the virtuous and the good, "glory, honour, and immortality; and begotten them again unto a lively hope by his resurrection from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Thus are the sons of Adam saved from the first condemnation of death, which was introduced by his transgression, and never repealed by their own righteousness. But it is to work out another salvation with fear and trembling. The same Gospel which proclaims "the good tidings of great joy," assures us that the promise of eternal life is alone unto them "that seek for glory, honour, and immortality, by patient continuance in well doing." They "who are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness," have still to expect "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." It is declared, that "if we sin wilfully, after having received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." These threatenings are founded upon the principles of the strictest equity; for, "if they that despised Moses's law, died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy,

who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the spirit of grace." Those who are risen with Christ, and expect to enjoy everlasting life with him, are commanded to be "dead to sin, and alive to righteousness." They are to seek a kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness, and to prepare themselves for it by all holy conversation and godliness.

Whoever attends to the tenour of the Christian dispensation will perceive, that its object is to enforce every moral duty, and cherish every pious affection, by more noble and more animating inducements, than would have been pertinent under the former dispensation. Every discourse of our Saviour respects the moral improvement of the human heart; and in all his actions he displayed the beauty of holiness. All the writings of the Apostles after they had preached, what *they* termed the Gospel,—that is, the death and the resurrection of their Divine master, repentance and remission of sins,—were of a practical nature. There is not a virtue which they omit to inculcate with the most persuasive eloquence. They incessantly remind the early converts, that they are brought out of darkness unto light, that they may no longer

"walk as the children of darkness, but as the children of light." The Epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus, whom he was instructing in what *he* denominated *doctrines*, are entirely lessons of moral discipline. *Sound morality* is with him *sound doctrine.**

It is an important fact, although too much disregarded by controversialists, that all those passages relative to the mediatorial office of Christ, which have been detached from their connections, and assiduously collected together, to serve as columns in support of speculative dogmata, are in reality occasional expressions, uttered at different times, and upon various occasions, *solely to enforce a practical attention* to the fundamental doctrines, upon which Christian communities had been established, in the course of their mission. Whenever the death of a crucified Saviour is referred to, in their epistolary addresses, it is in order to recommend a pious and conscientious discharge of every moral duty. It is by way of appeal to their grateful and generous feelings. It is to inspire them with the love of the Saviour, with filial gratitude towards *his* God, and *their* God, *his* father, and *their* father; and to induce them to

* See 1 Tim. i. 9, 10.

love each other, even "as Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us." St. Paul, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, encourages, exhorts, admonishes the Christian converts, to submit to the sanctifying and purifying Spirit of the Gospel. "For the love of Christ, (says he) constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and he died for all, that they that live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."* The Apostle Peter, in his general Epistle, admonishes the brethren, "be sober, hope to the end; for the grace that is brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." "For as much as ye know that ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb, without blemish and without spot."† He exhorts them to be of one mind, having compassion one of another, to love as brethren, and

* 2 Cor. v. 14. † 1 Epist. i. 13—19.

to rejoice if they suffer for righteousness sake; placing before them the example of Christ, "who hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us near unto God."* St. John writes, "if we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not tell the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; for the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin."†

Notwithstanding the obscurities in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which still occupy the attention of commentators, the grand design of the writer, through every part of that Epistle, is most obvious. It was to detach these Hebrews, from the obstinate predilection they entertained, for the rituals of the former dispensation, by demonstrating the superiority of the Christian, in the dignity of its founder, the efficacy of his death, and the encouraging assurances it conveys to the humble penitent, of a more complete forgiveness of iniquities, transgressions, and sins, than could have been obtained from all the oblations and sacrifices under the law. In the course of his argument, the writer warns them not to remain satisfied with an inactive

* 1 Cor. iii. and passim. † 1 John i. and passim.

belief, even in those doctrines which he has pronounced to be of the highest importance; for these can alone be valuable, as they become operative of the great work of sanctification, or improvement in the moral nature of man. "Therefore," says he, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, *let us go on unto perfection;* not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God: of the doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands,"—which were initiating and introductory ordinances,—" and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment; and this will we do, if God permit."*

We now perceive in what manner, and to what an extent, the extraordinary merit of the Son of God is influential in the salvation of mankind. It has obtained pardon for their former offences, rescuing them from the condemnation of death, that they may serve God in newness of life. Neither doth Christ nor his Apostles speak of that kind of merit, in his mediatorial character, which is to become a substitute for personal holiness; or which will justify an impenitent sinner in the sight of God,

* Heb. vi. 1, 2, 3.

however confident his faith, or accurate the articles of his creed. "Think not," says the great teacher of morals, "that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

The righteous conduct of the ancient worthies, which was so acceptable to God, as to render them the medium of conveyance of many blessings to mankind, was operative in a similar manner, although in so inferior a degree. They did not completely rescue from vice and misery, but they placed those whom they rendered the participants of the divine favour, in a more advantageous state, and enabled them to become participants of more exalted blessings.

The piety of Noah secured his own family and

* Matthew v.

their descendants, from the destruction which overwhelmed the ancient world; but they were not rendered pious or happy by his obedience to the divine command. Nor did it, in any respect, justify them while they were in a state of depravity. His sons were preserved from the contagion of evil example, by the dreadful event; and the moral state of a new race was obviously improved by the universal calamity. But it was through the medium of new inducements influencing their minds. It is also obvious from historical facts, that such inducements operated variously upon the posterity of Noah. Some of his sons, and their offspring, soon relapsed into a state of depravity; while of others the deportment was regular and virtuous. The faith and piety of Abraham, procured for his posterity privileges, by which they were wonderfully distinguished from the rest of mankind; but it depended upon themselves to render these privileges permanent sources of happiness. The decent character of Esau saved his descendants, the Moabites, from the conquering sword of the Hebrews, at their first entrance into the land of Canaan; but their subsequent depravity destroyed them. The piety of David suspended the calamities of the apostate Israelites; but they did not repent, and they afterwards

perished. These, and other instances which are upon record, proclaim aloud to what an extent the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; and consequently they present to those who are thus benefited by the piety of others, with the most powerful motives to imitate their example.

In like manner was the Son of God, the appointed medium of spiritual blessings, to all those who believe and repent; that they may become heirs of God, and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ." Those who truly repent will reform; and their reformation must consist in "denying all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and living soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world." When he laid down his life for his flock, it was to purchase to himself a *peculiar* people; but their peculiarity consists in being *zealous of good works.* The merits, the superior merits, of the author and finisher of our faith, are not a covering for moral deformities; but they are calculated to inspire us with a "faith which worketh by love;" "which overcometh the world," which purifies the conscience from dead works, which qualifies us for happiness, and renders us diligent to make our calling and election sure, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the

everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

To conclude, if mere speculation be of so little importance, what shall we say of that faith, which boldly turns the grace of God into licentiousness? This is crucifying the Lord afresh, and putting him to open shame. It is making him the patron of vice, and the minister of sin. "If, (says St. Paul), while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is Christ the minister of sin? God forbid."* If sin be at any time hateful to the Deity, it must be hateful at all times. If it be in its very nature a disqualification for happiness, no man can be happy until his sinful propensities be subdued. To believe the contrary is to believe an impious absurdity. Such a faith must originate from a corrupt heart, or from an understanding peculiarly weak. It is not *faith*; it is the idiotism of credulity attempting to consecrate depravity.

* 1 Pet. i. 10. † 1 Gal. ii. 17.

CHAPTER II.

On the Exaltation of Christ.

The preceding offices, which the scriptures have ascribed to Christ, relate to the state of humiliation and suffering in which he was placed during the years of his public ministry, and by which it was terminated; we shall now consider that *Exaltation* which was the result, and the reward.

There are, in the Old Testament, many predictions concerning the *Exaltation* of Christ. These, like all those future events which are to take place by the intervention of human agency, were expressed in obscure and figurative language, otherwise the freedom of human agency would have be destroyed. There were also many predictions concerning the *Humiliation* of that great Prophet, who was to arise and redeem Israel; but the spirit of national ambition diverted the public attention from these statements, and fixed it on that which was more

flattering to their pride. The figurative language of the ancient prophets, induced the Jewish nation to hope, that the deliverance would be of a temporal nature. Nor was it probable that they would think otherwise; for as they were not conscious of the bondage of sin; as they cared little about a future state of existence, concerning which nothing was absolutely promised, or clearly revealed; and as they were, at the period to which some of the prophecies pointed, under the Roman yoke, it was natural to expect that this Prince and Saviour would enable them to regain their liberty, and restore to them a splendour, equal to that which they had enjoyed in the days of Solomon.

It was through the medium of these expectations, that the Saviour was enabled to lay the foundation of his spiritual kingdom by imperceptible degrees; and without those commotions which would have been opposite to its nature and object. It was by virtue of these prepossessions, that so much attention was paid to him by the people in general, when he appeared among them as a prophet sent from God, working miracles to prove the divinity of his mission; otherwise they might all have been of the same opinion with his enemies,

who accused him of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. If the peculiar nature of his kingdom had been fully declared, their prejudices must have operated in a direction, that would have been inimical to its establishment.

We are in this instance, also, presented with an evidence, that the ignorance and prejudices of men are made subservient to the important plans of their Creator. The Supreme Director is at perfect liberty to communicate the degree of knowledge to his creatures which he may deem the most proper. He permits them to reason from what they know, and he does not restrain them from drawing wrong conclusions; but he takes advantage of their very ignorance, and renders it conducive to their future good.

Their expectations of a temporal Messiah, who should lead them on to victory and to glory, diffused a knowledge of his mission, and rendered him the object of popular attention. But chagrin at their disappointment created him many enemies, and finally conducted him to the cross, through the ignominy of which it was ordained that he should ascend to a throne.

Jesus Christ did not hastily remove such prejudices, from his immediate disciples and fol-

lowers; for, in imitation of his Father's example, he preferred natural means to the extent of their efficacy. He doubtless knew, that if he had prematurely revealed to them the whole counsel of God, they also would have been offended, and have forsaken him. This position becomes probable from the surprise and alarm they expressed, when he found it necessary to inform them of his approaching death. He cautiously prepared the way for the introduction of his kingdom, by evincing, from the purity of his morals, the wisdom, equity, and benignity of his conduct, that he was qualified to reign. He had gained such an ascendancy over their understandings and affections, that the temporary disappointment of his disciples did not induce them, for a moment, to exclaim against him as an Impostor. They were stupified with astonishment, that such a character should suffer with malefactors; and that all the promising expectations, raised by so wise and good a Being, should be frustrated; but their complaints were merely expressive of the greatness of their disappointment. "We trusted that this was he who should redeem Israel," is the only expression upon record, that escaped from their lips. Their admiration of his character, previous to his

death, their deep sorrow at that mournful event, succeeded by the joy at a triumphant and miraculous resurrection, subsequently placed their faith in the divine mission of their Lord and Master, upon a basis that could not be shaken by all the shocks of persecution. In consequence of this process, their minds were fully prepared to receive information and instructions relative to that kingdom, which they were the constituted instruments of establishing in the world.

Thus did he gradually instruct his immediate followers, and the most unprejudiced among the Jews, to expect some extraordinary event. By declaring that he came to establish a kingdom, he encouraged the hopes of his adherents; by declaring that his kingdom was not of this world, he quieted the alarms of his enemies. Such declarations, in connection with the hints occasionally given, concerning his ignominious death and triumphant resurrection, furnished evidences, after he had triumphed over the grave, sufficient to convince every serious reflecting mind, that he was of a truth the Messiah, ordained not only to redeem Israel, but the whole world, from a more fatal and ignominious bondage than that of the Roman yoke.

The description given of Christ's kingdom in the Gospel, respects its introduction into the world, and its complete establishment in a future state.

Before our Saviour had entered upon his public ministry, the prophet John was appointed to prepare the way of the Lord, by preaching repentance, and proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. His own ministry was an introduction of this new kingdom, by promulgating an accurate code of moral laws, which he exemplified by the excellency of his own practice. This kingdom of God, and of his Christ, was not introduced by the splendour of conquest, or the acclamations of the multitude. It came not with observation; but it gradually and imperceptibly made its way into the hearts of the well disposed. Although its object was so different from the wishes, and its principles so repugnant to the maxims of the world in general; although he foreknew that it would be strenuously opposed by the Proud, and the Depraved, yet he foreknew, also, that it would surmount every difficulty. When he compared the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard-seed that was

sown, and to the leaven which was put into meal, he beautifully illustrated, and predicted, the certainty of its spreading, notwithstanding the smallness of its origin. Its primary object was to oppose, and finally to overthrow, all the powers of darkness, by illuminating the minds, and improving the hearts of men, in a manner consistent with the freedom of their own choice; for they were to be a *willing* people in the day of his power; and every evidence of its being cordially received was a presage of future success. After the seventy disciples had been sent into the cities and places, where he proposed first to plant the standard of his Gospel, " by working miracles, and proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven is nigh," they returned with transport, saying, " Lord, even devils are subject to us through thy name." He also expressed his joy at their success, as it was a commencement of the conquest that was to be obtained over the powers of darkness; and an anticipation of future victories, over that spirit which still worketh in the children of disobedience. " He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

Having thus introduced a kingdom which is not of this world, he retired to complete its establishment; and by his triumphant resurrec-

tion and ascension, he has established this kingdom for ever. Hence it is, that the future state is so frequently represented as a *Kingdom;* and its blessed inhabitants are deemed Heirs of the Kingdom; and it is enjoined upon them to walk worthy of God, who hath called them into his Kingdom and glory. Such passages evidently relate to the future world over which he is to preside.

When our Saviour says, "My kingdom is not of this world," he expressly intimates that there is a resemblance between his kingdom and those which are established among mankind, but that it possesses a difference which constitutes a characteristic superiority. Of these resemblances and differences, we shall endeavour to take a transient view.

I. The term *Kingdom* immediately suggests the idea of a *monarchical* government. This form is superior to every other, for the prompt issuing of mandates, and the prompt execution of every purpose; and the Sovereign enjoys, without competitor, all the honours of majesty. When uncontrouled power is possessed by an Individual, he is able to do the most extensive good, and the most extensive mischief. This

renders absolute power so dangerous, when committed into the hands of men. Their Wills may become the only law; and these Wills are mostly capricious and tyrannical. The perfect character of the Son of God, and the manner in which he used his miraculous powers in the introduction of his kingdom, are the most encouraging assurances, that no danger can be derived to his subjects, by "all power being committed to him, both in heaven and in earth."

II. A grand peculiarity of Christ's kingdom consists in its being of a *heavenly* and *spiritual* nature: it is not of this world. It is repeatedly denominated the *kingdom of God*, the *kingdom of heaven*, by way of contrast to the kingdoms of the earth. Its laws and maxims came immediately from heaven. Its sovereign is a messenger sent by heaven; and its object is to conduct us to heaven. This kingdom of Christ is of a *spiritual* nature. He is destined to rule over the *minds* of men; and all his conquests are to be over the *heart* of every individual subject, "casting down *imagination*, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every *thought* to the obedience of Christ." "Though we walk in the flesh," to continue the language of St. Paul, "we do not war after the flesh;

for the weapons of our warfare are not *carnal*, but mighty through God to the pulling down of the strong holds." In the kingdom of Christ, no other sword is employed but the *Sword of the Spirit, which is the* WORD *of God.*

When the terms *spiritual* and *carnal* are opposed to each other, in the language of scripture, and the works of the *flesh* are placed in contrast with the works of the *spirit*, we should recollect that the contrast is not confined to propensities peculiar to the *corporeal* system, in distinction from what is *mental*, speaking philosophically. But it represents the contrast between those principles, dispositions, and pursuits, which are predominant in the mind, from the influence of *sensible* and *worldly* objects, and those nobler and more interesting objects and pursuits, which, although invisible in their nature, are infinitely more worthy to engage the choicest powers and faculties of the soul. Under the works of the Flesh are placed, not only adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, drunkenness; but idolatry, incantations, hatred, contentions, intemperate zeal, wrath, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, &c. Whereas, "the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." In a philosophical sense, they may equally

be referred to the state and dispositions of the *mind;* but the vices enumerated as works of the flesh, respect those sinful propensities, and violent agitations, excited in a wicked and undisciplined mind, by the seductions or irritations of *sensible objects.* The opposite virtues are the fruits of an infinitely better spirit. They are the result of principle; implanted by the proper exercise of the mental powers; proceed from nobler motives, and are cherished by nobler hopes, than the desire of immediate selfish gratifications.

III. We have had frequent occasion to observe, that in most of the empires in the world, the laws are partial, capricious, and mutable. They are often framed with contracted views, and in order to be rendered beneficial to one class of the community they become oppressive to the others. In all our penal laws, the severity of the punishment greatly exceeds the immorality of the offence; it being the principal attempt to enforce obedience by *terror.* The code prevalent in the kingdom of righteousness is a *moral* code. It is perfect in its principles, universally beneficent in its object, permanently obligatory upon all men, in every age, and every clime. Its principles furnish a model for all human governments; and the

nearer they approach to these, the nearer will they approach to the perfection of human happiness. The sanctions of the divine laws are always equitable. The punishment of every misdemeanour arises from the nature of the action, or is proportionate to the degree of its criminality. The offender cannot complain of partiality or injustice, in the sentence of condemnation, for he is always self-condemned.

Nor is the infliction of pains and penalties their distinguishing characteristic, as it is in human laws. Its subjects are animated to duty by the incitements of hope, gratitude, love, and reverence, for the character of their righteous and beneficient sovereign. We have already proved that, in the kingdom of Christ, the sanctions chiefly consist of promises. It incessantly pronounces blessings upon its obedient subjects. That system of terror which was so necessary under the Jewish Dispensation, is no longer the predominant principle. Rewards are amply stated, and incessantly urged. Punishments are seldom denounced, always with reluctance, and in very indefinite language. They are calculated to inspire a salutary anxiety and solemn awe. The encouragements to obedience are calculated to call forth the most exalted, and the happiest effusions of the pious mind.

This kingdom of heaven will be fully established at the resurrection of the just. It will be separated from the kingdom of darkness, and then there will be no punishment; for there will be no transgression. It will be a kingdom in which shall dwell perfect righteousness. There will not be a rebellious subject through the realms of bliss. Every subject shall serve with a willing mind, without compulsion or conscription. The future kingdom is a state destined for remunerations alone, for the rewards of conditional and comparative merit; and these will be distributed in their various gradations, without exciting, in a single breast, the tormenting passions of jealousy or envy. These gradations will be so equitably and wisely arranged, as to excite the admiration of all. Those who may be placed in the lowest stations will accept the blessing with humble gratitude, and enjoy pleasure in contemplating the superior rewards conferred upon superior desert.

IV. Earthly sovereigns are extremely prone to forget the object for which they were appointed to govern; to be inflated with pride; to ascribe the honours of their station to their own personal worth; to imagine that it is the duty of subjects to administer to their ambition, and to promote their personal gratifica-

tions. Their subjects are also prone to foster the delusion. Their eager desires to share in the munificence of their sovereign, disposes them to flatter his vanity, and gratify his passions. Their optics are so debilitated by the lustre surrounding a throne, that they finally perceive not the distinction between the insignia of an elevated station, and the character which constitutes true dignity. "They vote the mantle into majesty," however unworthy the person whom it may adorn. The weakness and impotence of the individual man, is concealed by the guards and numerous attendants surrounding the monarch; and the artificial splendour of diadems and costly robes, delude the gazing multitude into the supposition, that they must be the indications of superior worth.

Jesus, the appointed sovereign of a spiritual kingdom, the vicegerent of heaven, never forgot the objects of his appointment, or the interests of his subjects. Nor did he seek honour from men. He was totally destitute of this artificial splendour. His most acceptable attendants were illiterate fishermen; and in place of the soft luxuries of a palace, he knew not where to lay his head. His greatness was innate; and it shone bright through the obscurity of his station. All power was given to him by the source of

power. It neither inspired him with vanity, nor administered to his passions. It was solely exerted for the good of his subjects. Whenever he appeared in public, the garment of humility, and the robe of righteousness, distinguished him from the crowd. His sceptre was a sceptre of unerring justice, and infinite benevolence was his choicest diadem. In his person we see and admire the superlative majesty of goodness. When he first made the public declaration that he was a king, he was not only in the form of a servant, but a prisoner at the bar; yet the dignity of his virtues impressed his judge and prosecutors with awe. At the time he was the most "despised and rejected of men, he was the most honoured by his God." "About the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land, until the ninth hour, and the sun was darkened, and the vail of the temple was rent in the midst."* He was great, wonderfully great, and most powerful, when suspended on the cross; for by that act of submission to the great sovereign of the universe, he slew the enmity between God and man, destroyed the tyrant death, and obtained a victory over the grave.

V. The monarchs of the Earth are mostly of

* Luke xxiii. 44.

inordinate ambition. They are restless to extend their domains, delight in conquests, and cannot enjoy even the luxuries of their station, while there remains an enemy unsubdued. This disposition is a characteristic of their folly: and it is a copious source of their crimes. But the ambition of the Messiah, the prince of peace, crowns every other excellence. He also has enemies, many, powerful, and inveterate; whom he is ambitious to subdue, nor will he rest until they shall be totally subdued. These enemies are also the enemies of the human species. They are, ignorance, vice, and misery.

VI. All human governments are of a limited extent. The most beneficial effects of the best laws are confined to particular communities, and those systems of policy, which may promote the prosperity of one country, may prove inimical or injurious to the neighbouring states. The wisest of human legislators, feels not the obligation to study the interests of all foreign powers. The summit of his desires is to live in peace and amity with surrounding nations. Such, however, is the ambition of statesmen; such the interest and dispositions of the subject, that friendly intercourse is seldom of a long continuance. Jealousies and animosities, from a competition of interests, are perpetually excited

in communities the most civilized. It could not be expected from any monarch upon earth, that universal empire would diffuse universal happiness. The profoundest wisdom, and the most scrupulous adherence to justice, would not enable the best of sovereigns to extend their influence, at a remote distance from the seat of government. Enormities would still be committed by subalterns, to which the supreme ruler may remain a stranger, or which he will not be able to redress.

It is most desirable that the Son of God should obtain universal dominion. It would be worthy of an angel's trump, and the great voices in heaven to proclaim, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." Righteousness, peace, and harmony, will then prevail. These will flow in a mighty stream, instead of those torrents of blood which are now desolating the earth, and disgracing humanity. "Its inhabitants will then walk in the ways of the God of Jacob. They will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up the sword against nation, neither will they learn war any more."

VII. The kingdoms of this world are of a

short duration. Empires succeed to empires in a rapid succession. The most extensive conquests are finally surrendered into the hands of time; and, like the conquerors themselves, the places that once knew them, know them no more. The history of nations is chiefly the history of their rise and their fall; and respecting many, in vain do we search the map for the places of their existence. Monuments of brass, and massive columns, erected to perpetuate their memories, themselves decay. The voluminous systems of antiquities, which occupy the eager attention of the antiquarian, what are they but compilations of ruins?

Not so the kingdom of heaven! That will remain, eternal as its founder. It is established on a basis that cannot be shaken, that cannot decay;—the basis of eternal truth, righteousness and peace. It will be supported for ever, by all the relative attributes of deity, his power, his wisdom, and his goodness. Christ, the vicegerent of the universal sovereign, shall personally reign, until all the enemies to human felicity shall be exterminated; then "shall he deliver up the kingdom to his father, that God may be all in all."

VIII. But there is one peculiarity in the kingdom of Christ which demands particular

attention, as its resemblance has never existed. All the kingdoms of the earth are derived from a very different origin. Some have taken their rise from parental or patriarchal authority; some from the occasional appointment of a chief to preside over counsels, or lead on to war; some from the suffrage of the people; some by what is termed the right of conquest, or by treacherous usurpation. No one sovereign has resigned his love of ease and happiness, has passed through scenes of poverty, humiliation, and disgrace, and has voluntarily submitted to a painful and ignominious death, from the hands of his own subjects, in order to purchase a right to reign over them, that he might render them happy! They have impoverished and disgraced others, and have shed the blood of thousands and tens of thousands, to obtain a throne, but no one hath voluntarily shed his own blood. Yet this is the mode by which the Son of God has purchased a right to his heavenly kingdom.

This unprecedented fact, is thus stated by the Apostle Peter in his sermon at Jerusalem. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree; him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."*

* Acts v. 30.

St. Paul has practically enlarged upon this doctrine in his Epistle to the Philippians, in the following manner: "Look not every man to his own things," that is, in the contracted spirit of self-love, "but every man also on the things of others," with the generous attempt to promote their happiness. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the father."*

To this wonderful plan of the universal father, which was acceptably executed by his well-beloved Son, does the Evangelist John refer, in that glowing language which characterizes the book of the Revelations. "And I beheld, and

* Phil. ii. 5. 11.

heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb, for ever and ever."*

IX. Another exalted office to which the Son of God is entitled, in consequence of his transcendant merits, is that of an *universal Judge.* He is appointed to judge the world, and to render to every man according to his works.

We are assured, from the highest authority, that "the Father judgeth no man, but he hath committed all judgment to his Son."† "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."‡ "We must appear before the judg-

* See Note I. † John v. 22. ‡ Rom. x. 10.

ment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."*

In ancient times the character of a Judge was united with that of a Sovereign. To declare the sentence of acquittal, condemnation, or pardon, was the exclusive prerogative of majesty; and in modern days, the sentence pronounced by the delegated interpreter of the law, must receive the sanction of the Sovereign, before it can be executed. This solemn office devolves also upon the Son of God, who is the representative of his Father. This power, as well as the office of a sovereign, he will exercise in his father's name. It is he who will say, at the solemn period, "Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," &c. or "depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."†

This delegated power, so honourable to the Saviour of mankind, is also in compassion to human nature. It is said, that "God hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the son of man;" that "it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons into glory, to

* 2 Cor. v. 10. † Matt. xxv.

make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings:" and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews explains the reason of this appointment. He rejoices that we "have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Is it not consoling, that the world will be judged by one who has lived among us, has been exposed to similar temptations, the force of which, though he was triumphant over them, he must have known? This son of man knew what is in man. When he was upon earth "he judged no man," because he must, then, have condemned every man that he judged. But he was compassionate to all, excusing human weakness; ascribing the cruelty with which he was treated, to the ignorance of his enemies, and weeping over the sins and miseries he was not authorized to prevent. He rejected not social intercourse with the exclamation of a proud Pharisee, "Stand off from me, for I am holier than thou!" He sought that intercourse, which enabled him to promote the social virtues. His familiar converse with publicans and sinners, with which he had been reproached, rendered him perfectly acquainted with the human heart, in all its seductions and self deceptions; and that

benevolence of character which was so conspicuous when he was on earth, gives assurance to the most timid of his followers, that he will be prompt to recompense every endeavour to obey him, and to serve his cause. Offenders themselves may be assured, that he will not indulge to vindictive wrath, but he will be inclined to merey, as far as the plans of divine justice will admit. May we not also suppose, that judgment is committed to the Son, in order to mitigate, as much as possible, the awefulness of the solemn scene? We were informed in the Jewish history, that the terror which accompanied the promulgation of the moral law, from Mount Sinai, was insufferably great; so that "the people said unto Moses, speak *thou* with us, and we will hear; but let not *God* speak with us, lest we die." If such an intermediation was desirable, simply upon the *promulgation* of the moral law to the Jewish nation, the sanctions of which were confined to temporal concerns, how much more desirable, when a strict scrutiny shall be made into the individual *observance* of these laws, and the infinitely more momentous sentence of *condemnation* or *acquittal* is to be pronounced?

Thus have we endeavoured to investigate the nature of the mediatorial office of Christ, as it appears to us to be clearly stated in the sacred writings. We have compared the Scriptures with themselves, traced the conformity subsisting between the language which was current under the former dispensation, and the current language under the covenant of grace. We have also shewn, that the propositions we have advanced, harmonize with the principles which the God of nature has implanted in the human breast; and upon which he has acted in the usual tenor of his conduct with the human race. We have scrupulously adhered to the rules which we had prescribed for our own observance. We have been cautious not to build upon occasional, or metaphorical expressions, but we have been attentive to the constant reiterated language of Scripture. The principles advanced, clearly appear to us to be most rational in themselves, most honourable to the moral attributes of the Deity, and most consistent with the character of the great, the universal Father.

We trust that we have, under this article, also displayed another characteristic excellency in the Christian revelation, in the appointment of such a Mediator between God and man; the native excellence of whose character, the perfec-

tion of whose obedience, whose benevolence towards the whole human race, and the greatness of whose sufferings for their sakes, so far exceeded all that has been done and suffered by the preceding prophets, or intermediates between an offended God and sinful man.

In our conceptions, those statements which we have considered as strictly scriptural, are striking manifestations of the wisdom and goodness of God, in the adopted mode of reconciliation. They unite the affection of the Parent with the venerable characters of the Legislator and Judge. They indicate an abhorrence of the offences which compassion resolves to pardon. Such a degree of punishment is inflicted, as evinces that no one can violate the divine laws with impunity, although mercy forbids the punishment to be commensurate with the demerit of the transgressor; for then would human happiness be annihilated. The sentence of condemnation, denounced against sin, will be executed; for every soul that sinneth shall die. The supreme Governor has been just to his threatenings; but he has mitigated the sentence, which might have been eternal death; and he is become the justifier, passing a sentence of final acquittal, upon all those who believe and obey. We are thus made sensible of the

enormity of our offences, by the mode of our acquittal. We are kept at a distance, as unworthy to approach the throne of heaven, without a righteous intermediate, to whom the whole merit of our pardon is ascribed. Our advocate with the father, by submitting to a death from which he was morally exempt, has purchased a right to become the captain of our salvation. By his resurrection from the dead, he has not only relieved every doubt, respecting a future state, but he has given every assurance to the sincere penitent, that his penitence is accepted; for the supreme Parent hath entered into a solemn covenant, in which he engages, that all who believe in his Son shall have everlasting life.

The Father of mercies not only thus promulgates his hatred of sin, but also his love of goodness. He recommends his Son to the attention of the whole human race, with the complacency of a Parent. "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." He confers exemplary honours upon exemplary virtue; for, in reward to his obedience, he hath exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, and appointed him to be his vicegerent in the kingdom of heaven. The mediation of Christ is calculated, as it was ordained, to call forth every devout affection; substituting

love, gratitude, admiration; in the place of that habitual awe and terror, which pervaded the Jewish dispensation. It recommends obedience, from motives best adapted to a dispensation of grace; from gratitude to the Father, "who so loved the world, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," and "who spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all;" from gratitude to the Son, "because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and they who live, should not live unto themselves, but unto him that loved them, and gave himself for them."

The distinguished honours conferred upon the immaculate Son of God, also present his disciples with the most animating motives to excel in all goodness, by obeying his precepts, and imitating his example. We are assured, that the exemplary Pious and Good, shall, like him, be exalted in a future world, to stations of peculiar honour. Those "who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as stars in the firmament." Those "who suffer with, or for him, shall also reign with him." We cannot imitate his example in a more acceptable manner, than by uniting with our piety towards God, philanthropy towards the whole human race; becoming fellow-workers with him, in promoting

universal happiness; feeling the warmest sentiments of pity for those who are ignorant of their God, their Saviour, themselves, and their duty; and cultivating the most cordial and complacential affections, for those "who are of the household of faith;" "who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" who "are the children of adoption;" of the same family, travelling the same road, and preparing for the same inheritance.

Such principles, duly cherished, would make us ashamed of those little pettish contentions, and uncharitable censures, generated by ignorance, and fostered by pride, concerning speculative questions; all of which cannot be true, and some of which are of no practical importance. These are doctrines of inference; and as we are all liable to err, we should grant, with one consent, the indulgence which we claim from others.

Jesus Christ hath frequently declared to his disciples, "Whatever ye shall ask of the Father in my Name, he will give it you."* The Apostle Paul advises the Ephesians to give thanks always, for all things, unto God the Father, in

* John xv. 16.

the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* He enjoins it upon the Colossians: "Whatever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the Name of Jesus; giving thanks to God the Father, by him."†

Whenever the word *Name* is applied to God, it is a generic term, as it were, in which is concentrated all that is great and good. When it is applied to the Son of God, it seems, in a similar manner, to comprehend the whole of his mediatorial character; all that he has done, all that he has suffered, the consequent power and authority which he has received from his father, to govern his church, and to communicate spiritual blessings, according to the respective exigencies of his people. We are commanded to supplicate for every blessing in his Name; that our minds may acquire the habits of humility, being deeply impressed with a sense of the distance, at which our moral character have placed us, from that Being who has made us:—It is to evince that we are unworthy of receiving from an offended parent, whatever may be requisite for our happiness:—It is, moreover, to call to our remembrance the greatness of our obligations to him who has done so much for us; to inspire us with a reverence for that perfection of character

* Eph. v. 20. † Col. iii. 17.

which entitled him to do so much for us; and with a solicitude to imitate what we cannot fail to admire:—It is to teach us to obey him as our Lord and Sovereign, and revere him as our future Judge:*—It encourages us also to "come with boldness to the throne of grace," by recollecting the assurances given, that "whoever heareth the word of Jesus, and believeth on him that sent him, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."†

* See Note K. † John, v. 29.

PART III.

ENQUIRY INTO THE EXTENT OF THE BLESSINGS PROMULGATED TO THE WORLD, IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

We have remarked, that in all human plans and projects, our estimation of the beneficence and the wisdom of the projector, or the agent, will be regulated by the intrinsic nature of the good to be produced, connected with the extent of its promised advantages. As Christianity is the last and best dispensation, as it is the completion of the Divine plan, for the good of mankind, it is natural for us to infer, that the proposed good, will be as extensive as it is in the power of infinite Beneficence to render it. These are the first suggestions of reason, and they would be cheerfuly indulged, had they received the open sanctions of a divine revelation. But the extent of these blessings is not clearly revealed. A dark mist hangs over the subject. Hence the various disputations and diversities of opinion among speculative Christians. The obscurity may, with great propriety, stimulate our

enquiries, since it is a subject of so much moment; but as the truth can only be discovered by collecting the leading facts which belong to it, and drawing just inferences from them, and as we are so extremely prone to err, respecting doctrinal inferences, no one should arrogate to himself the right to dictate, or enforce his opinions as essential articles of faith. In this spirit we propose to pursue our enquiries.

The new dispensation is always represented as a dispensation of Grace and Mercy; as containing tidings of great joy to all men. It represents the divine benevolence, in all its ramifications, as earnestly engaged in the important concern of man's salvation. Its sole object being to reform and bless, it invites, exhorts, admonishes. It is most ample in its promises, as well as in its instructions. The felicity in reserve for the righteous, is represented in general terms, but these are most encouraging. The expressions the most frequently used, are *Life* and *Immortality*. Life, to which we know, by experience, that every man is strongly attached; and immortal Existence, for which every man has an instinctive desire.

To the sincere Christian, the triumph over

death and the grave is always represented as complete; they are not to have any future dominion over him. But what is to be enjoyed in that life, is not fully or specifically revealed. The joys of the heavenly state are described as being beyond the power of human conception. "It is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."*

The judgments denounced against the finally impenitent, are not so frequently repeated, nor are they enlarged upon in a similar detail. They are occasionally, and as it were, reluctantly introduced. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord," his inspired messengers think it their duty "to persuade men," from motives operating upon the less noble passions of fear and dread; but they greatly prefer expatiating upon the manifestations of love, from that Being whose moral essence is benignity. We are, however, assured, that the punishment of the incorrigibly wicked, will be great and terrible; particularly of those who reject this last and best dispensation of mercy: that it will be proportionate to their guilt in preferring darkness to light, and the pleasures of sense to the high recom-

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

pense of virtue. "For, if we sin wilfully," says the writer to the Hebrews, "after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary. He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the spirit of grace?"* This writer says, also, in the same epistle, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame."† He illustrates his position by the following allusion, "for the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them, by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which

* Heb. x. 28, 29. † Heb. vi. 4, &c.

beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." The obvious meaning of this alarming passage is, that since the Divine being operates upon the mind of men, through the instrumentality of various motives placed before them, if they cannot be influenced by the most powerful of all motives, which never have been equalled, and cannot be exceeded, nothing remains for them, but to suffer the dreadful consequences of their impious folly, to the utmost extent.

Whatever the nature of future punishment may be, we must conclude that, as it appears terrible in the eyes of Omniscience, it must be terrible in itself. But many things respecting it are involved in darkness. Nor can we, for a moment, doubt the wisdom of this concealment. In every case, and at every period, the wisdom of God has adapted the degree of information, precisely to the immediate exigencies or capacities of his creatures. In no one instance has the Deity condescended to gratify impatient curiosity. This would be injurious to that confidence, or implicit faith in his promises, which is always represented as being acceptable to him, and is so becoming in us. If we may

thus express it, although he has clearly illuminated the path which leads to virtue and happiness, he has ever been cautious not to throw superfluous light into the eyes, which might dazzle and confound, or might augment the number of our impertinent enquiries. Our Saviour tells his disciples, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."* Although this declaration may relate to his own sufferings, to their future initiation into the nature of his spiritual kingdom, the calamities which should overwhelm the Jewish nation, and the persecution which they were to endure, at a future period; yet it is consonant with the usual tenour of his conduct, and correspondent with the whole plan of Providence. When the disciples asked him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" The question was censured as impertinent, and he directed their attention to what was of infinite importance to themselves: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."† A similar curiosity induced them to enquire concerning the man who was blind from his birth: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" It was, probably, their intention to lead him

* John vi. 12. † Luke xiii. 23.

into a discourse concerning a pre-existent state; but, as his mission entirely related to a future existence, and not to any that might have been prior to the present state of things; he contents himself with informing them, that the infirmity of blindness was neither a punishment for this man's sins, nor for his parent's; but that it presented their master with another opportunity of confirming their faith in him, by a miraculous restoration of sight. After the resurrection, when the faith and confidence of the disciples, in their Divine master, were restored and confirmed, they expected that they should be made minutely acquainted with his future plans. "When they were come together, they asked him, saying, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" The very statement of the question, manifested that they were not prepared for a proper answer; for they were as yet ignorant of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom—And he said unto them, "It is not for you to know the times, or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power; but ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you."* In like manner, when Peter was informed of the calamities of his advanced years, he was inquisitive concerning the fate of

* Acts i. 6.

other disciple, John. This was a question of mere curiosity, and it was evaded. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee, follow thou me."* Under the Jewish dispensation, most of the prophecies, both of mercy and of terror, were expressed in ambiguous language, and rendered capable of various interpretations; but they were well calculated to encourage, or to alarm and terrify; and these were their sole objects. Truths, which it is essential to human happiness to be known, and which the human faculties had not discovered, during the lapse of ages, are finally revealed to our admiring eyes. Events in the womb of futurity will, in their due time and order, be brought forth into the light. Truths, which are obscurely or ambiguously expressed, can only be known when incidental circumstances throw a due degree of light upon them; when the dispositions of men, and the mental powers, become properly qualified for the office of investigation; which was not to be expected in the earlier periods of their exercise.

It is a remarkable fact, that the future destiny of the Wicked is expressed, not only in ambiguous phraseology, but in terms which apparently contradict each other. It is said, that in the state

* John xxi. 28.

of future punishment "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; that they shall depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" and we read in the Revelations, that "the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever." We are also told that "the wages of sin is *death;*" that "the wicked shall be *destroyed* from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power;" and it is indubitable that the terms indicative of *destruction*, constitute the predominant phraseology, respecting the incorrigibly wicked. But it is as explicitly stated, that the wicked shall rise from the dead, as well as the righteous; "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every man may receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil;" that some shall be beaten with few, and some with many stripes, according to the degrees of their guilt. We read, moreover, of a *second* death, that shall have power over some but not over others; and again we read, that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed, is *death.*" Although the blessedness of the righteous is expressed in varied phrase, and their felicity is placed in different points of view, yet these are

not inconsistent with each other. They all unite to inspire the pious Christian with the humble hope, that he shall possess glory, honour, and immortality.

That the obsurity, respecting the state of the wicked, was designed, there can be no reasonable doubt. It was as easy to be explicit in the one case as in the other. It is most probable that no definite statement could have been made, at an early period, in the infancy of human reason, and in the centre of barbarian principles, when imagination and wild conjecture always take the lead, without its having been productive of the most pernicious consequences. Had the severity of punishment been fully revealed, and displayed in all its horrors, the human mind might have been overwhelmed with anguish. Even the most righteous and pious of men, might have been so deeply impressed with a consciousness of their own infirmities, as to suffer inextinguishable dread, lest they also should come into this place of torment; while the incorrigible wickedness of those most dear to them, would fill their souls with insufferable agonies. On the other hand, should any rays of mercy have shone distinctly through this dreadful gloom, upon unprepared minds, the salutuary force of

terror, which is the most powerful in its influence of all the passions, upon sordid and uncultivated minds, might have been destroyed. A single ray of hope might have operated, as the expectations of a reprieve are frequently known to operate upon condemned criminals, and have entirely checked any incipient attempts at repentance.

The passages, however, notwithstanding the obscurities that surround them, exist; they must exist for an useful purpose. They must each of them have some specific meaning, and as God cannot contradict himself, they can be contradictory in *appearance* only. The time must come in which they will be rationally explained, or they would occupy an useless place in the revelation of God. But as no other revelations are to be expected, the explanation can only be obtained by the due exercise of our rational faculties, upon competent documents placed before us.

The obscurities in which this subject is involved, relate to the object or design, and the duration of future punishments. Its precise nature cannot be known, and its place can be of no moment. As the local situation of future bliss is not circumstantially revealed, we cannot expect information upon this point. The object,

and the duration of future punishments, are of infinite moment.

The general, and indeterminate expressions of scripture, have given rise to three hypotheses, very distinct from each other. These we shall proceed to consider; as an opportunity will thus present itself of examining those passages of scripture, upon which each hypothesis is professedly founded. Nor shall we neglect to apply the maxim we have advanced at the commencement of this disquisition; "when different parts of Scripture seem to oppose or contradict each other, those explanations which are most consonant to reason and most worthy of the Deity, ought to be adopted."

Some, indeed a great majority of Christians, have, for many ages, strenuously supported the doctrine of the absolute, irremediable, eternal misery of myriads and myriads of souls, that die in an impenitent state, enemies to God by wicked works. Nor have these christians manifested a modest diffidence, concerning this intricate subject, so becoming the obscurities which surround it, but they have peremptorily enforced *their* interpretations of scripture language, as infallible truths, which it is dangerous to disbelieve or to

oppose. Let us examine whether they have not been too precipitate.

The tremendous hypothesis is founded upon some of the expressions already cited. Our Saviour, even the benignant Jesus, says, that in the final punishment of the Wicked, not only "there shall *be weeping* and *gnashing of teeth*, but that *the worm shall not* die, nor the *fire be quenched*;" and that the righteous judge shall say, "*depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*"

This is very strong and very alarming language. It must have a signification of infinite moment; but this signification must be consonant with those sentiments, which it is our duty and happiness to entertain, concerning the essential benignity of the universal parent, and also with the general tenour of scripture phraseology.

We may observe that the expressions of so terrific a nature, are comparatively few. They are occasionally and incidentally used. They manifestly belong to the class mentioned in our third rule, respecting the interpretation of scripture language. Some of them are obviously metaphorical, and cannot be the basis of first principles. Their object is to enforce or to illustrate, truths already known or admitted.

In the interpretation given of them, which expresses a conscious existence in eternal misery, they contradict the current language of scripture, which uniformly denounces, *death*, *destruction*, *perdition*, as the portion of the wicked; and it has been shewn above, that the meaning of these terms is fully explained to us, by the sentence pronounced and executed, upon Adam and all his posterity. The execution of this sentence may be attended with that horror so emphatically expressed by weeping and gnashing of teeth; and the escape may be as impracticable as it would be to destroy a never-dying worm, or to extinguish an inextinguishable fire.

But the strong expressions now quoted, are, in their very contexture, *metaphorical*, and, according to every system, demand an explanatory solution; for they cannot possibly contain any literal facts. Weeping and gnashing of teeth, cannot be reconciled to the ideas, universally formed, of a spiritual body. Nor can we possibly suppose that an eternally material worm, shall be eternally gnawing upon an immaterial being, or a spiritual body; or that the same subject, shall also be exposed to the operations of a material and eternal fire, without being transmuted or consumed by that pervading and destructive element. That these are congru-

ities, must be universally allowed; and they can only be escaped, by our having recourse to some explanations which shall be more pertinent. As neither the worm nor the fire can be eternal, in a literal sense, to apply the words to the subject operated upon, is, in reality, an arbitrary assumption, a mere conjecture; and a question remains, whether the term of his existence *may not be* as indefinite, as that of the gnawing worm, or consuming fire, *must be?*

As this severe interpretation is conjectural, and may be false, we are at liberty to adopt another, which we cheerfully acknowledge ought not to be received, until it be brought to the test of reason and scripture. The following may possibly be the import of these expressions.

The wretched offender may be condemned to suffer intense agony of mind, and a perpetuity of the most painful sensations, either during the whole of his existence, or during the period that his extreme demerits shall continue, that is, until his character shall be changed. As long as the subject shall remain in his state of depravity, there will, according to the force of the metaphor, be food for a gnawing worm, and the scorching flame. The worm shall not suddenly die, nor shall the fire be suddenly quenched. The dreadful process shall uninterruptedly con-

tinue, until the purpose of destruction, or of transmutation, shall be accomplished.

We shall adduce some observations in support of the above solution, and we invite the advocates for the hypothesis we oppose, to search the scriptures with similar diligence, that an impartial comparison may be made.

The prophet Isaiah, in describing the dreadful judgments which awaited the rebellious Israelites, says, "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness has surprised the hypocrite; who among you shall dwell with devouring flames? Who among you shall dwell with *everlasting* burnings?" No man can rationally suppose, that the prophet refers to the eternal torments of hell, for he is not speaking of that subject; and it is plain, from what has been already urged, that the Jews would not have understood him. The same prophet utters also the following remarkable expression, "they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me, *for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched,* and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.*

The expressions of our Saviour, which are the basis of the system under examination, are manifestly a quotation from this sublime pro-

* Isaiah lxi. 24.

phet, which he applies to the future condition of the wicked. "It is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

That the prophet, in the above passage, intended to express a painful, protracted, and disgraceful consumption of the body, cannot admit of a doubt; but from the very nature of the subject, the process must finally terminate. In fact, it is already terminated, notwithstanding it is said of the fire, that it would be everlasting. Where then is the obligation, according to the laws of reason, or the rules of just criticism, to distort this quotation from its primitive sense, and render the terms absolute, when uttered by the *Saviour* of mankind? And for how dreadful a purpose is this distortion made? It is to condemn a fellow-mortal, and a fellow-sinner, into an eternity of woe! Surely, we ought to pause, and tremble at the brink; not rashly to plunge into so awful a sentiment.

The other term, *everlasting fire*, is also adduced in support of the doctrine of eternal misery. But, it is to be observed, that the whole of the argument resting upon this term, rests upon the arbitrary assumption, that Everlasting is always to be understood in the most absolute sense,

or as being synonymous with the word *eternal*; a duration which is literally without a termination. But by what law are we compelled to consider it in this absolute sense? Strong expressions are daily used by the moderns, who profess to observe much greater precision of language, than was usual among the ancients, in a manner which is not consonant with their literal import. How frequently do we use the words *ever* and *never*, without any reference to an eternal duration?

But if we carefully attend to the nature and genius of scriptural language, we shall discover that the word *everlasting*, is always used with peculiar accuracy and precision; and this very circumstance fully evinces, that the interpretation of it, usually given by theologians, is not only erroneous, but extravagant. It is generally employed in a sense infinitely short of an eternal duration; and the application of it, in the most *absolute* sense, may be considered as an *exception* from the general import, authorized, and vindicated by the peculiar nature of the subject, to which it is thus applied.

It is said, in the Epistle of Jude, that "the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, suffer the vengeance of everlasting fire;" and from history, we learn, that the fire was not suddenly or ab-

ruptly extinguished. Those cities were destroyed without a vestige remaining; the devouring fire raged with unabating fury, until it had consumed all that the element could consume.

Should any one be inclined to apply the expression, to the souls of the wicked inhabitants in a future state, the extravagance of such an application would be sufficiently exposed, by observing, that the Apostle obviously refers to an historical fact, which was familiarly known by those to whom his Epistle is addressed; and, therefore, it cannot relate to the world unknown. "Even as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah," says he, "and the cities about them, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, *are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal or everlasting fire*, πυρος αἰωνίε. No sufferings in a future state can serve as an example, to the present race of beings.

That the wicked perpetrators of such enormous crimes, shall not escape punishment, we learn from an expression uttered by our Saviour. But his statement gives no countenance to the doctrine of irremediable woe; on the contrary, he says, "that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment,

than for this generation." An expression, which demands a much less terrific construction.

From the above example, we learn that the punishment which was declared to be everlasting, endured without intermission, as long as the subject existed; and this indicates, in every case, the precise signification of the term. We are not to pronounce, in a peremptory manner, according to the sound of the word *everlasting* to a modern ear, but according to the *nature of the subject* to which it is applied. In this sense is it invariably used in the sacred writings, and it constitutes a peculiar idiom of their language.

"I do set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And I will look upon it, that I may remember the *everlasting* covenant between God and every living creature, of all flesh, that is upon the earth."*

"You shall keep a feast to the Lord throughout your generations: you shall keep it a feast, by an ordinance *for ever*."

"The righteous shall dwell in the land *for ever*," says the Psalmist, "I will praise thy name *for ever*." "Wherefore, if meat make

* Gen. ix. 13. 17.

my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands; εις τὸ ἀιῶνα *everlastingly*; or as long as my life continues.

In these cases, the nature of the subjects excludes the idea of an absolute eternity. Innumerable are the instances which might be adduced, where the words αιων and αιωνος, which are mostly translated *everlasting*, necessarily signify a *limited* duration; by their application to subjects, which are, in themselves, of a transient, or perishable nature. But when the terms are applied to the *eternal* God, they must, by the same rule, signify an *eternal duration*, in the most absolute sense.

"From *everlasting* to *everlasting*, thou art God." "Thine is the kingdom, power, and glory, *for ever*." "To him who only hath immortality, be honour and power *everlasting*," &c. &c.

The abettors of the sentiments we are opposing, lay great stress upon a particular expression of our Lord, who, in terminating his description of the solemnities of the last judgment, declares, "these (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." They state, that the words in the

first part of the sentence, translated *everlasting*, and those in the latter, translated *eternal*, are precisely the same in the original. επελεῦσονται ἕτοι εἰς κολασιν αἰῶνιον· οιδε δικαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰῶνιον.

They allege, that as the word αἰῶνιον is acknowledged to signify absolute eternity, respecting the righteous, no rules of criticism will admit of a limited sense when applied to the state of the wicked. But the inference, however plausible, is not conclusive. If the sentiments advanced above, be accurate, that the duration annexed to the term everlasting, is to be regulated by the nature of the subject, we must have recourse to the subject for an explanation; and by a due attention to the subject before us, we shall discover a meaning by which the parallel will not be disturbed, although we reject the melancholy inference.

The Righteous will enjoy everlasting life, in the most absolute sense, because they *are Righteous*, and because they will be *eternally* confirmed in goodness. They will dwell in the presence of God, and of the Lamb, for ever, and they will sin no more. If they acquired the character of being righteous, during their conflicts with their spiritual enemies, in this state

of trial, we may be assured that they will not degenerate in those purer regions. Their love of piety and of virtue, shall be as immutable as the everlasting inheritance they shall possess. Were it possible for them to rebel, they would suffer ejection, as is reported of fallen angels. The *depravity* of the wicked must, in the strictest sense of the word, be eternal, to expose them to a punishment of equal duration with the blessedness of the Righteous. Should their torments finally consume the wicked, their existence and suffering would cease together. The worm can no longer gnaw, or the fire inflict anguish. If the punishment should prove *corrective*, it must, according to the invariable sense of the term *everlasting*, cease to be *eternal*. The *wicked* only are to be punished, but they will be no longer wicked; the worm will not die, as long as there remains a cause of contrition and remorse; beyond this, it cannot live. The fire will not be prematurely extinguished, so long as the dross remains, but the gold that is purified, is never left in the furnace. Should chastisement produce reformation, reformation will ensure pardon from that Being who has declared, with a strong asseveration, "that he delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but had rather he would return and live."

In all the cases quoted above, we have been enabled to decide concerning the precise signification of the word *everlasting*, by our being made acquainted with the subject to which it was applied. Where that was in its nature transient, the term was also of a transient import; where the subject is absolutely permanent and immutable, *everlasting* must also be considered in the most absolute sense. But when the future punishment is said to be everlasting, we must be made acquainted with the nature and design of the punishment, before we can judge of the extent of its duration, and in what sense the word is to be construed. For, the rule authorized by every other example, is, that *the duration of the subject is not to be predicated by this term, but the extent of the term itself is to be ascertained from the nature of the subject.*

But if we further attend to the expressions employed by our Lord, in the passage under consideration, we shall perceive an important discrepancy in his mode of stating the rewards of the Righteous, and the punishment of the Wicked. It is not said of the Wicked, that they shall go into *eternal life*, an *eternal life* of misery, which is the language preferred by our hypothetic reasoners, and would be the most pertinent, if their system were true. Nor is

there a single passage in which it is declared, in a manner equally explicit, that the wicked shall rise again into a *life and immortality of absolute misery*. It remains for those who believe that such will be their destination, to explain the cause of a distinction universally observed; or why does the revelation of God always avoid those expressions which they always prefer?

It has also been urged, that a reiteration of the words, as in the expressions *from everlasting to everlasting*, must imply an eternity in the absolute sense.

We might observe, in answer, that this assertion appears not unlike a concession, that the single term is destitute of sufficient force to express the idea. So likewise is the reiteration itself; for many instances may be produced, where similar phraseology is applied to subjects which cannot admit of this interpretation. David says, "So shall I keep thy law, continually for ever and ever." "I will praise thy name for ever and ever." "Let all flesh bless thy name for ever and ever."

Other modes of using the same term are also adopted to give it additional force, in subjects where absolute eternity must be excluded. It is not unfrequently thought by the writer to be inadequate to his subject, without an auxiliary

to increase its force. The Septuagint version, has the following expression in the song of Moses, " the Lord shall reign everlasting upon everlasting, and farther, τον αἰωνα καὶ επ αἰωνα, καὶ ἔτι. Exod. xv. 18. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars, εις τυς αιωνας και ἔτι, to the ages and farther, Dan. xii. 3. We will walk in the name of Jehovah our God, εις τον αιωνα και επεκεινα, to the age, and beyond it. Mich. iv. 5.*

Once more; there are some very strong expressions in the book of Revelations which are adduced in support of the doctrine of endless torment. From these we will select the following, as our observations will be equally applicable to every other.

" If any man worship the beast, and his image, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the lamb, and the smoke of their torments ascendeth up *for ever and ever*, and they shall have no rest day nor night.†

Perhaps the proper answer to the arguments deduced from these, and other expressions of a

* See Note L. † Rev, xiv. 9—12.

similar complexion, would be to maintain, that as no frail mortals have been found worthy to open the seals of this mysterious book, there is much danger in trusting to their interpretations of its peculiar phraseology, in support of any peculiar dogmata. Its language is confessedly figurative beyond example, containing the very *caricature* of imagery, if we may be allowed the expression. We might attempt to erect an edifice upon a whirlwind, as successfully as to establish a theological question upon such a basis. Since this book itself requires an explanation, it is impossible to deduce an argument from it, upon the present question, that can be supposed to convince a doubtful mind. The terms, the *beast*, *his image*, *to drink of the wine* of the *wrath* of God, *fire* and *brimstone*, *day* and *night*, are figurative. Nor can any man, who is not, we had almost said, *supersaturated* with his system, really suppose that the holy angels and the lamb, will be eternal spectators of eternal scenes of misery! We are, therefore, authorized to enter a protest against the literal interpretation of particular parts of this figurative scenery, as long as the genuine sense of the passages themselves remains in perfect obscurity.

But lest this answer should appear evasive

and unsatisfactory, we shall remind our opponents, that synonymous expressions are used in the Old Testament, in a connection which would render the idea of eternal existence in misery, incongruous and absurd; and, consequently, the words translated everlasting in such passages, must lose the dreadful emphasis, which is so arbitrarily given to it.

It will be sufficient to transcribe the following sublime passages from the prophet Isaiah.*

" Come near ye nations to hear, and hearken ye people, let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies. He hath utterly destroyed them; he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven; behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment, &c. For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. *And*

* See ch. xxxiv.

the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day, the smoke thereof shall go up for ever, from generation to generation, it shall lie waste, none shall pass through it for ever and ever."

Let us now consider this subject in another point of view.

It is acknowledged, by every Christian, that in the Jewish religion, the manifestations of the divine goodness were not so uniformly or conspicuously displayed, as in the gospel of Christ; and yet under that dispensation all the Pious exultingly acknowledged, that the *mercy of the Lord endureth for ever.*

At the solemnity of placing the ark in the temple of Solomon, " the musicians lifted up their voices with the trumpets and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever." Upon the dedication of the temple, when Solomon had made an end of prayer, the children of Israel bowed themselves with their faces to the ground, and worshipped and praised the Lord, saying, "*for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.*" " Sing unto the Lord,"

says David, "Oh ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, for his *anger endureth but for a moment.*" In many of the Psalms of this divine poet, the everlasting goodness of God is the subject of his rapturous devotion. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his *mercy endureth* for ever." "Oh give thanks unto the God of Gods, for his mercy *endureth for ever*, &c."* If the manifestations of this mercy were confined to the distinguished favour shewn to the chosen people, which was to terminate with the termination of their political state, the words *for ever* must be confined to a very limited duration. If they are to be understood as expressive of the essential benignity of the divine character, there must be a termination to the misery of all his creatures, or his mercy cannot endure for ever. For what are we to understand by mercy, if not a kindly disposition towards offenders; being slow to anger, and ready to forgive? Is it decent to interpret these words in the most absolute sense, when connected with the infliction of punishment, and ascribe to them such narrow limits when they refer to his pardoning mercy?

The above considerations must surely evince, that we are not under the painful necessity of

* See the whole of the 136th Psalm.

explaining those solemn declarations occasionally used, respecting the punishment of the wicked, according to the prevailing sentiments attached to them. The eternal misery of the reprobate was no part of the ministry given to the apostles, when they were sent forth to preach the gospel. They warned sinners, that if they continued impenitent they would aggravate their guilt; but they were not commissioned to proclaim the eternal misery of all those who should neglect the gospel. Their threats were occasional and indefinite; their promises absolute and intelligible; LIFE, IMMORTALITY. Their more acceptable office was to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, and to assure the human race that the Son of God was not sent into the world to condemn the world, by proclaiming the horrid tidings of damnation into irremediable woe, to the multitude, but to call men to repentance and salvation.

The next hypothesis we shall consider, respects the absolute *annihilation* of the Wicked and Impenitent, which its advocates maintain to be more consonant with reason and justice, than the preceding; as well as with the explicit and current language of Scripture. They urge that, since Life is uniformly considered as a

blessing in these Scriptures, and valued as such by the living themselves, we cannot suppose a greater judicial punishment, which it would be consistent with the divine justice to inflict, than to deprive an impenitent offender of a gift which he is habitually abusing. In human laws, the punishment of Death is deemed the severest which can be inflicted, consistent with the humanity of a civilized people; and, by the divine laws, under the Jewish Dispensation, it was reserved for the most atrocious offences. Criminals are generally disposed to submit to banishment, slavery, imprisonment, and to a great degree of corporeal suffering, that they may escape the horrors of dissolution. There is every reason to conclude, therefore, that the death which is denounced, as the wages of sin, implies *annihilation*, or *eternal death*, in opposition to that *eternal life* which is promised to the Righteous. This doctrine, they affirm, does not militate against the justice of God; for, as the best of created beings cannot be *entitled* to a perpetuity of existence, the wicked cannot possibly have any pretensions of right. They have manifested, by the whole tenour of their conduct, that they are unworthy to live; nor can they suffer an injustice, in being deprived of a blessing which they have abused.

To those who object, that it appears to be

inconsistent with the divine wisdom to destroy an innumerable multitude of beings, whose existence he is able to perpetuate, and for which man is apparently formed, they oppose an answer from analogy. They remark, that the Supreme Being does not, in other cases, bring to a state of perfection, every production of his hands, although it possess equal powers of nature. There is, through the whole of the animal and vegetable creation, a profusion of existence; but innumerable multitudes perish without arriving to a state of maturity. Numbers of blossoms fall from the trees, that once promised an abundance of fruit. Myriads of the smaller tribes of beings are swept off instantaneously, and in the most rapid succession. Not only animals innumerable, but a great majority of the human species die prematurely. But what is of greater authority to Christians, they maintain, that the Scriptures themselves forcibly inculcate the doctrine of *annihilation* respecting the Wicked; that the passages, in support of this doctrine, are very numerous, and as explicit as language can make them. If we adhere to the rule, from which no one has ever deviated without falling into errors, if we expect to find the truth seated in plain, current, intelligible language, and not in an arbitrary interpretation of occasional expressions and

metaphorical terms, *death, perdition, destruction,* must be the future punishment of the wicked, not an endless existence in absolute misery.

It has already been remarked, that the passages of Scripture promising eternal life to pious Christians, are innumerable; and eternal life is also promised to them in such a manner, as to suggest the idea, that it belongs to them *exclusively.* The natural inference is, that it cannot, in any sense, be applicable to the Wicked; nor is there a single passage in the Scriptures, which threatens an *eternity of misery* to the wicked, in terms equally explicit and unequivocal, with the eternity of bliss inherited by the righteous. *Death, destruction, perdition,* are the terms perpetually employed; which are not in the least calculated to suggest the idea of a conscious existence. "What fruits had ye of those things of which ye are now ashamed," writes the Apostle Paul to the Romans; "for the end of these things is *death.*"* "For the wages of sin is *death,* but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."† For, when we were in the flesh, or carnally minded, the motions of sin which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth the fruits of *death.*‡ To be carnally minded is *death,*

* Rom. vi. 24. † Rom. vi. 21. 23. ‡ Ch. vii. 5.

but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."* "Sin, when finished, bringeth forth *death*," says St. James.

"Broad is the road that leadeth to *destruction*."† "*Destruction* and misery are in their ways."‡ "For many walk whose end is *destruction*."§ "When the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance of them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with *everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."‖

"Be in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of *perdition*, but to you, of salvation."¶ "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in *perdition* and *destruction*."** St. Peter, attempting to shew the fallacy of the argument, that because the judgments of God are deferred, they will not be executed, adduced the incredulity of the Antediluvians, and the terrible consequences which followed, "whereby the world which then was, being overflowed with water, *perished*;" and he adds, "but the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word, are kept

* Ch. viii. 6. † Mat. vii. 3. ‡ Rom. ix. 2. § Phil. iii. 9.
‖ 2 Thess. i. 2. ¶ Phil. i. 28. ** 1 Tim. iv. 9.

in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and *perdition* of ungodly men;—the Lord is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should *perish*, but that all should come to repentance." What evidence can be adduced, that the Apostle, in this passage, employs the same words in two opposite senses; ascribing temporal destruction simply to the transgressions of the ancient world, and eternal misery to ungodly men under the gospel?

Such are the terms constantly used by the Apostolic writers, when they expostulate with the wicked. Nor can they be of a metaphorical import, expressive of a meaning directly contrary to the habitual usuage of them. For they could not have been understood, by the persons to whom they were addressed, in any other sense than that to which they were accustomed to apply the words *death*, *destruction*, *perdition*, *perishing*, &c. Not an individual among them could have supposed, that by the expression, the wages of sin is *death*, but the gift of God is eternal life, that they equally imply an *eternity* of conscious existence, the one of misery, and the other of bliss. As the words θανάτος, απωλεια, συντριμμα, ολεθρος, had never been applied to eternal duration by any Greek author, it is extravagant to imagine that the Apostles would have selected them, to express what might have

been easily expressed in more explicit language. Such language, in all ages, and in all nations, conveys the idea of *privation* only, or *dissolution*, and is totally inapplicable to a state of POSITIVE MISERY.

Thus far do the advocates for Annihilation proceed without embarrassment; and they manifestly enjoy a superiority in argument over their opponents. But considerable difficulties surround an hypothesis which appears to be so well supported. It is positively asserted, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that, all may receive the things done in the body, according to that they have done, whether it be good or whether it be evil;" and that Christ shall denounce to the Wicked, "depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Are we to suppose that the wicked shall be awakened from the grave, merely to hear their doom, and then sink into a state of complete annihilation? We are also assured that there will be a gradation in the punishment of the Wicked, according to their comparative demerits; that it shall be more tolerable for the ancient inhabitants of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Ninevah, in the day of judgment, than for those who reject the gospel of Christ; that those whose knowledge of their master's will was

comparative ignorance, shall be beaten with *few* stripes, for their transgressions; but a severer punishment awaits those who enjoyed and abused, advantages which were infinitely superior. These statements are totally inconsistent with the doctrine of immediate destruction. They require a series of painful sensations, inflicted with different degrees of severity, previous to annihilation. But a sentiment like this is surely to be rejected. It is inconsistent with every principle of legislation, and every professed object of punishment. It serves not either for correction or example. The wicked are not to be reclaimed by the severest chastisements. We cannot suppose that these punishments will be necessary warnings, to operate *in terrorem*, upon the Righteous in a state of bliss, to prevent *their* revolting from their allegiance. Nor dare we to imagine that they are inflicted from a principle of revenge in the divine mind; from a *vindictive* spirit; for this alone can be harboured by the cruel and relentless among men.

We shall submit the following solution of these difficulties to our candid readers, to be confirmed or confuted by superior critics. The former is most ardently desired.

The hypothesis now under consideration, is built upon the *assumption*, that the expressions *Death, Destruction, Perdition,* so frequently em-

ployed in the sacred Scriptures, are perfectly synonymous with *absolute irremediable annihilation.* But are we compelled to submit to this assumption? What proofs have been adduced that they are synonymous? It has been remarked, upon a former occasion, that various have been the opinions of men concerning this death. It has been considered as a separation of the conscious principle from the material frame, and the term has thus been confined to the dissolution of the body, while the soul is supposed to possess its vital powers with increased vigour. The term is more commonly applied to the dissolution of the corporeal frame, and a total separation from every thing we now enjoy by the possession of life; a termination of all that we suffer or enjoy in the present world, connected with a gloomy uncertainty respecting a future existence. As these different conceptions of men actually exist, by what law is it that the *death, destruction, perdition,* threatened to the Wicked, shall be construed into *absolute annihilation?* Or be applied to a state of irrecoverable nonentity?

If we closely investigate the subject, we shall discover that the supposition is arbitrary, and without a precedent. Nay, it is more, it is contrary to every precedent. It opposes the whole

tenour of Scriptural language, which, as now can be demonstrated, *has applied* these terms in a sense totally distinct from *annihilation.* Whatever conceptions our progenitor Adam may have formed, when the sentence of Death was passed upon him; however vague, confused, or hypothetical, the opinions of men, in every age, may have been, concerning the nature and issue of death, the *Resurrection* of Jesus, his triumph over Death and the Grave, and the assurances of *eternal life* through him, demonstrate, without the possibility of a reply, that the *Death*, *Destruction*, *Perdition*, threatened and inflicted upon the sinners of the ancient world, did not amount to the total *irrecoverable extinction of being.* Now we *know* that Death, Destruction, or whatever term was used, had its signification bounded by a *period*, α αιων; and that the Almighty did not resign his power of subsequent restoration, according to the good pleasure of his will. The execution of the sentence of death upon the whole human race, has not disabled him from placing his beloved offspring into a new state and constitution of things; into a new world, in which other scenes shall present themselves; so that, as the Apostle expresses it, "old things shall be done away, and all things shall become new." Where, then,

is the *necessity*, or the *consistency*, of annexing the idea of *absolute extinction of being*, to similar expressions, when they are applied to the Wicked and Impenitent, who have finally rejected the Gospel? What are the evidences that a similar process shall not take place in the different ages, or periods of eternity? To which periods, the terms *Death*, *Destruction*, *Perdition*, for the same reason, and from a continuation of the same plan, may be equally applicable? For, those threatenings which were obviously confined to the present period and state of things, were expressed in language as formidable, as that which is applied to the state of the wicked in a future world, and in a future state of condemnation. "The day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely *die*," was the threatening pronounced to Adam; and, under the Gospel dispensation, the wages of sin is *death* to the finally impenitent. I will *destroy* man whom I have created. Every living substance shall be *destroyed*. The transgressors shall be *destroyed*, says David, they shall be *destroyed for ever*; the Lord will *utterly destroy* all nations. But this utter destruction will not prevent their future Resurrection; for, "as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive." "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul, the last Adam, a *quickening* spirit: for we must

all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." A process which thus characterizes one αιων, or period, may possibly characterize another; and the application of similar terms to the punishment denounced, by no means forbids the expectation of a similar result; nay, it authorizes us to expect it. We have sufficiently shewn, that in the use of the strongest terms, reference is always made to particular states and periods; that the words *everlasting*, *for ever*, *for ever and ever*, do not necessarily plunge us into the abyss of absolute eternity. Whatever shall be as permanent in its effect or operations, as the subject shall be in its durability, is always, in the language of Scripture, described as *everlasting*. Such decrees concerning them are, in a moral and relative sense, everlasting respecting them; but to an absolute eternity they are totally irrelevant. Absolute eternity is frequently represented as comprehending a congeries, an aggregate of lesser everlastings, if we may use the phrase. The hills are *everlasting*, but Jehovah is the Rock of Ages, the Rock of *Everlastings*. From *everlasting* to *everlasting*, he is God; he is the same immutable being, through all the ages, periods, changes, which his creatures may experience. Finite beings, like ourselves, require such representations, that our thoughts may

repose, as it were, upon the divisions and subdivisions of eternity, and not be lost in the immensity of the subject!

From the above observations it is evident, that we are not *compelled* to annex to the terms *death*, *destruction*, *perdition*, the idea of an irrecoverable loss. They may be applicable to the future state of the wicked, in the same manner as experience manifests, they have been applied to the wickedness of the present world; and the future plans of Divine Providence may be analogous to the laws and regulations, observable among the present race of mortals. When it was said to Adam, "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," we know, from historical facts, that the sentence was not immediately executed, and that he lived several hundred years after his disgrace. The punishment, therefore, consisted in his being *rendered mortal*, and subjected to all the painful contingencies of mortality. A thousand years, to the Lord, are but as one day. The events which he has preordained, and which must take place, at their appointed periods, being present to the divine mind, are frequently represented as being present in actual existence or operation.

We shall consider it of no small importance, if the minute examination of scriptural evidence, and the mode of reasoning we have pursued, shall evince that neither of the hypotheses under examination, have been established on a solid basis. As it is most desirable that they should both of them be false, it is pleasant to learn that the arguments adduced to support them, are extremely fallacious. It is a natural and necessary inference, from each hypothesis, that the mercy of God has its limits. They profess to mark its precise boundaries. In the one, we are astonished at the information, that the abstract principle of personal justice, should triumph over goodness and mercy; too closely imitating the self-love of revengeful man. In the other, we may discover strict equity, and there may be no just cause of complaint; but it does not teach us to admire the infinitude of the divine beneficence. We are disappointed in those expectations, which we are naturally encouraged to form, from the boundless goodness of God, and even the declarations made, upon the first appearance of the Messiah, that God sent his Son, not to condemn, but to *save the World.*

The removal of the above errors, does not reveal to us the whole truth. But it shuts

the door against despair, and it opens the door of hope. It proves that the Lord may still be *waiting to be gracious.* According to the promises of the Gospel, those who believe and obey are secure of happiness; while the Disobedient are warned of certain and dreadful, although indefinite, punishments. They are evidently excluded from the *covenanted* mercy of God, which is manifested in this new dispensation; and they are left in awful ignorance concerning their future destination. Dark and impenetrable mists surround them. Yet as nothing decisive is revealed, a *possibility* remains that these mists may not remain through all the ages of eternity. It is *possible,* that unbelievers and impenitent transgressors, who are not entitled to the gift of God, eternal life, may again be subjected to the laws of a new life of affliction and trial, and finally, to the condemnation of a second death. Permanent existence can alone prove a blessing, to those who have acquired a due degree of moral excellency; in whom the love of God, and of their fellow-creatures, is the ruling affection of the heart. All others are said to be dead, while they live. They have the principle of destruction in their moral natures; for the natural wages of sin is death. But as in the present state of existence, an intermediate space between

the sentence and its execution, is allowed for the formation of a moral character, which shall be adapted to a state of felicity, it is not irrational to suppose that a similar indulgence, and similar acts of grace, may be experienced in future periods of existence. It is possible that their punishments shall prove corrective, which will answer an important end; and not an act of vindictive justice merely, which will answer no end to any being whatever. One fact is revealed to us, amidst these obscurities, that the degrees of punishment will be correspondent to degrees of guilt; that some will be beaten with few, and some with many, stripes, according to the aggravations of the offence.

The above statement will appear novel to many, but to no one, surely, can it appear either extravagant or unfounded, and to all it must be desirable. We are permitted to argue from analogy in dubious cases, and where no positive facts forbid us. The statement is encouraged and supported by incidental expressions, both by our Saviour and his Apostles; which appear more applicable to future acts of grace, respecting those who are exposed to a second condemnation, than to any other part of the divine economy. Our Saviour, in the affecting discourse with his dis-

ciples, where he describes himself in the character of the good shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep, has the following remarkable expression. "And other sheep I have, *which are not of this fold;* them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."* St. Paul, in that celebrated chapter of his Epistle to the Corinthians, where some important circumstances, respecting the future world, are enumerated, says, "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive; but every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God his father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is* DEATH."† Can the last enemy be destroyed, if sin and misery are to be of eternal duration? Can that death be destroyed, which holds myriads of beings in an eternal captivity? Can death be destroyed, without the introduction of universal life? St. Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy, orders that prayer, intercession, and thanksgiving, be

* John x. 16. † 1 Cor. xv. 22—25.

made for all men; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. He adds, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all men: *to be testified in due time.*"* In the mysterious book of the Revelations there are hints given, which are less obscure when applied to the above doctrine, than by any other explanation that can be devised. They mark various distinctions of life and death, which must have specific applications, although it may not be in our power to comprehend them. Thus in chap. xx. v. 5, "But the rest of the dead lived not again, until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy be he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power," &c. Again, v. 12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and the

* 1 Tim. ii. 1.

grave delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death," &c. The 21st chapter opens in the following manner: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, saying, the tabernacle, the dwelling of God, is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there *shall be no more death*, neither *sorrow nor cryings*, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

It would be extreme folly to propose such obscurities as the foundation of an hypothesis, but it is gratifying to observe, that principles rendered probable, by various coincidental circumstances, throw some rays of light upon these obscurities; for this augments the probability of their being true.

We must again recall to our consideration, some observations which have been made, con-

cerning the usual motives, or designs of punishment, observable in all human transactions. We remarked, that punishments are inflicted from a principle of resentment against evil conduct;—in order to deter others from committing similar offences;—to protect good subjects from being injured by the wicked and unjust;—and with the desire of reclaiming offenders themselves.* Surely, excepting there be an express revelation to the contrary, it is most rational, and most honourable to God, to ascribe to him the *choicest* of these motives. We cannot imagine that he is influenced by a spirit of resentment; much less could he retain his resentments, were the character of the subject to be totally changed by his sufferings. To punish the wicked in a future world, in order to deter others from vice, has something extravagant in the motive; nor can it be exempt from the charge of cruelty. No punishments can be necessary to awe the blessed into permanent obedience. None of these considerations are admissible. Total annihilation of the irreclaimable, it is true, may be an act of mercy. For as misery and wickedness are inseparable, there is no unjust or merciless severity in their total destruction of the wicked, where they

* See page 191.

cannot be subdued. But unless they were swept from existence by one indiscriminating ordination, the punishments nicely adjusted, to the comparative demerits of offenders, will require the protracted torture of myriads, without any specific object in view, worthy of a wise legislation.

In a wise legislator, in an affectionate parent, in a benevolent man, the motive the most honourable, and the most approved, is to RECLAIM the offender; to replace him in the rank of virtuous society, and to give him an opportunity to "bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." "If any of you do err from the truth," says the Apostle James, "and one convert him, let him know that he which converted a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."* It is most natural to suppose that the Deity will himself act upon the principle which he thus recommends, and which is thus enstampt with his approbation.

We shall also remark, that the proper signification of the word κόλασις, in that passage upon which so much stress is laid,† and which we translate *punishment*, is much more applicable to

* James, v. 19. † Matt. xxv. 46.

corrective punishment, than to *extirpation*, or total destruction. Its root, κολάζω, signifies to *restrain*, *repress*, to *moderate*, and to *chastise*, for the purpose of reformation, but never to *destroy*. If, therefore, the term *everlasting* be in its own nature indefinite, and the proper signification of κολασις, be *chastisement*, by what authority shall they be construed either into everlasting torment, or absolute annihilation? They do not of themselves pronounce so severe a sentence of condemnation; and we know not of any other expressions more explicit, to justify these interpretations.

As the expectation of a final reconciliation of all the intelligent children of God, to their universal father, is not opposed by the language of Scripture, consistently explained, thus is a belief in the doctrine necessary, in order to render the Scriptures consistent with themselves. The obscurer passages, which have any reference to the extent, or the final issue of the Gospel dispensation, by being considered as pointing to this very object, become more intelligible; and, notwithstanding the contrarieties in varied phraseology, each representation has its distinct and appointed place, illustrative of an uniformity in the divine plan of universal and unbounded benevolence.

We cannot be without apprehensions that this attempt to explain, what we have acknowledged above to have been intentionally expressed in an obscure manner, will be deemed bold and presumptuous. We have in some measure anticipated an answer by observing, that, although an early display of his gracious purposes might have been premature, yet it could not be the intention of the Deity that these obscurities should be perpetual. The expressions uttered must have a signification; and this can alone be discovered by the united efforts of our reasoning faculties. The only question is, whether the exercise of our faculties upon these subjects be premature? Whether the important changes which have taken place in the state of man, will not enable, authorize, and require us, to make a deeper scrutiny into these most interesting subjects, than could possibly have been done in the earlier periods of Christianity? The intellectual and moral character of the human species, both as individuals and in a collective state, may be considered as progressively forming; and human improvement consists in a regular advancement from one stage to another. The first state of uncultivated communities, is a state

of gross ignorance and inexperience. This is succeeded by various exertions, more or less feeble, more or less fortunate; necessarily accompanied by numberless errors, from the too precipitate and incautious use of the small stock of knowledge and experience which has been acquired, and which presumptuous ignorance considers as large and ample. At a period when the mental powers are recently awakened to exercise, and man is no longer an animal of mere sensation, the *imagination* becomes a swift precursor of the judgment. Its hasty and crude conjectures and conclusions are mistaken for realities. Erroneous and pernicious inferences are drawn from partial documents. Yet, in the wanton exercise of its powers of ratiocination, is the mind strongly disposed to think itself infallible. The cautious and more accurate exercise of the rational powers, must be in the later stages of human improvement; for it demands a large collection of well-attested facts; a clear perception of former errors, in the application of these facts to certain principles, or of deductions from them, and the exercise of a just discrimination, in order to escape similar errors. Christianity hath gone through these various stages, and hath submitted to the inconveniences of each. A number of important facts were

scarcely revealed, to remove the darkest ignorance, but this ignorance perverted the grand object of Christianity. The light shone in darkness, but the darkness of those who thought themselves illuminated, comprehended it not. As in the more ancient world, "the invisible things of God were clearly seen, from the creation of the world, until men became vain in their imagination, and their foolish hearts were darkened, by their professing themselves to be wise;" thus, in the new world, in the new moral creation, busy imagination perverted the truth, as it is in Jesus, as soon as it was revealed. It combined ancient prejudices and prepossessions with primitive principles; devised theological tenets, of which, at that period, the absurdity could not be detected, and these were finally rendered so sacred in human opinion, that reason, that choicest gift of heaven, that sole guide to direct us through the dark labyrinths of error, was forbidden to follow the clue which would lead us back into the light of day. Where the free exercise of our rational powers is deemed an offence, ignorance, error, imposture, and extravagance, must become triumphant. In a word, the pervertion of primitive Christianity constitutes the history of the Christian church; and the numerous volumes composing that history,

bear witness to the number and magnitude of these perversions.*

In this happy age, and in these thrice happy lands, we are arrived to the knowledge of our right to search the Scriptures for ourselves; and to exercise those powers of discrimination, which enable us daily to detect the numerous errors which were latent in the most venerated systems. We are better enabled to form just conceptions of the divine attributes, and of the principles most worthy of them in the present day, and we rejoice at the discovery, that those sentiments which our reason most approves, are the revelations from heaven. Although we may not, as yet, boast that we are arrived to the *age of reason*, we are certainly arrived to the age of *ratiocination*, which will lead to it. Nor can any principles of religion now make rapid and extensive advances, which reason cannot sanction. The absurd and irrational views which have been given of Christianity, have generated infidelity. Its most powerful objections to this divine revelation, are always directed against tenets which genuine Christianity knows not, and which are most repugnant to its nature. No thinking man, in the present age, can be expected to

* See Note M.

embrace our holy religion until it shall appear rational: and those who have been educated as Christians, are in danger of making shipwreck of their faith, unless they throw many of the superfluous and absurd tenets into the ocean of oblivion.

If it must be deemed irrational by all, who have not been systematically educated, to admit that the greatest, the best, the wisest, the most powerful of Beings, has decreed that a large majority of the human race, nay, of his own offspring, shall be eternally miserable for the sins and errors of a few years, and that either he *cannot*, or that he *will not* prevent these horrors, although he had professedly sent his Son to redeem them from sin and misery, Christianity cannot prevail until such sentiments shall be disgraced. Reason has been in perpetual conflict with opinions and prejudices for many ages; but we are at length arrived to an æra, in which we can boldly pronounce, for we can fully prove, that Christianity rejects every absurdity: and it is incumbent upon all who wish for its universal acceptance, to remove, not to protect, the stumbling blocks which have been so profusely laid in the way. We may also assert, that the *Presumption* originates with those who boldly maintain that they

are intimately acquainted with the whole counsel of God, respecting the destination of the Wicked; notwithstanding, the obscure manner in which their punishment is stated; and it can be no presumption to detect those errors, which are not honourable to God, and which are most distressing to the human mind.* Animated by these considerations we shall proceed.

If the advocates for the doctrine of annihilation, should deem the solution given above to be consonant with truth, they will readily give it the preference. Their system is manifestly consonant with humanity. It is embraced from an ardent desire to vindicate the justice of God, and from a principle of compassion to the Wicked. But the sentiment we have proposed, supports the cause of justice and of compassion, with still greater efficacy. It not only relieves the offender from eternal misery, but inspires the hopes that he may be happy at some future period. It not only vindicates the justice of God, but it renders his Wisdom more conspicuous; and it inspires us with the most exalted conceptions of his infinite Benignity. The command is, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy

* See Note N.

soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." These principles best correspond with the command. They have a natural tendency to excite, and perpetuate the affection to the extent required. For they remove every painful apprehension, and forbid every chilling suspicion. Although the doctrine of absolute annihilation greatly diminishes our horrors, it cannot entirely satisfy our minds. There is a deficiency remaining. We are still surprised that he who has done so much to reclaim sinful man, should have met with any insurmountable impediment to the completion of his plan: that he who wills that no man shall perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved, should not have his will accomplished; and that the very obstinacy of man, who is a being of his own formation, should finally become an insurmountable impediment to this desired object; that infinite wisdom itself should not be able to discover resources, which must be so pleasing to infinite benignity. Man, imperfect man, whom his Maker has appointed to be lord of the creation, is able to tame animals the most ferocious. He can do more; he can, by the force of discipline, introduce order and prompt obedience into extensive armies, composed of the most refractory and

abandoned of the human species. He can render thousands and tens of thousands, who in their individual characters, were the pests of society, its brave and powerful protectors. Is man more powerful than his Maker? Cannot he who best knows our frame, discover an efficacious discipline, correspondent to our characters and our errors? Is he compelled to have recourse to an act of annihilation of the man, resembling an act of desperation, as the only expedient left to annihilate sin and misery? Unless he be absolutely compelled, by some inexplicable cause, to such a measure, we may be assured that the essential benignity of his nature would forbid even this punishment. The wicked are still a part of his own creation. They were brought into existence, not by their own choice, but by laws beyond their controul. The passions and propensities, which they have egregiously abused, were not of their own emplanting. They are still his offspring. They were passively placed in that sphere of action which has exposed them to these sinful aberrations. When they awake into a new state of things, for they must all appear before the judgment-seat of God, will they not possess the same intellectual powers to receive instruction, and to profit by discipline? It is more than possible, that if some of the Good and

Virtuous, who are to enter into the joys of their Lord, had been placed in *their* situations, and exposed to *their* temptations, they would have been as abandoned. It is more than possible, that if *they* had passed similar advantages, and means of improvement, *they* would have had their portion with the Righteous. If they be not raised destitute of all the principles common to the human heart, may not new connections be rendered efficient to their final reformation?

The argument which has been urged relative to the premature destruction of plants and animals, is manifestly an argument of necessity. It is an attempt to soften difficulties which it cannot destroy. The profuse expenditure in the vegetable creation is no loss in itself to the perishing object; they are inanimate, and not capable of enjoyment or of sufferings. Nor are the inferior animals to be placed upon a level with the professed candidates for an eternal existence. These phænomena are the result of that wise and beneficent law, which provides a superabundance, as a protection against the possibility of an injurious deficiency, through the influence of contingent incidents; while the destruction of the superfluous multitudes augments the vigour, and promotes the

perfection of the plants or animals which are preserved. But the myriads of conscious and intelligent agents, capable of protracted enjoyments, cannot be swept away with equal acquiescence of our minds.

These sentiments, which a connected view of the Scriptures encourages us to entertain, are also much more consonant with the numberless declarations uttered, both in the Old and New Testament, concerning the infinite and inexhaustible patience and long-suffering of God. They, and they only, perfectly correspond with the assurances, that he delighteth not in the death of the wicked, but had rather he would return and live; that he will not retain his anger for ever; and with the glowing exhortation of the Psalmist, "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever!" Should we consider these expressions, as they might appear to the Jewish nation, and refer their primary application to the temporary blessings, which should flow from their obedience, or to his acts of kindness manifested to them, notwithstanding their repeated provocations, yet the principle remains immutably the same. The great God, with whom there is no variableness, cannot possess one character in this αιων, period, or state of things, and

maintain the reverse in another. If the doctrine of eternal misery be true, he must literally retain his anger for ever. Nor is the doctrine of absolute annihilation free from the inference. For Death is always considered in the Scriptures as a punishment; and in conformity to our modes of speech, it is always represented as being the result of the divine anger against sin. In this sense, therefore, must eternal death be viewed in the light of an eternal punishment. It is a privation of life and happiness, which shall be the portion of the reconciled children of God; and as long as this privation continues, he may be said to retain his anger against the other branches of his family.

To the inhabitants of the present world, our religion is always represented as a dispensation of Grace; of free unmerited favour; as proclaiming pardon, and proposing reconciliation to a world lying in the depth of sin and misery. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. When the benignity of the divine character could not manifest itself, by the exercise of complacency, it was displayed by the exercise of compassion and mercy. Benignity is essential to his nature; it must continue to operate wherever distress requires its aid. The severer the suffering which his wisdom may see it neces-

sary to inflict, the more will they need his compassionate and merciful interference. If he be now reluctant that any should perish, although the punishment consists of privation of life, and its concomitant blessing, will that reluctance cease in a future world? Shall any of his creatures there be suffered to drag on a miserable existence, never to terminate, or to terminate in the horrors of dissolution? Can his compassion, which is said to fail not, thus fail for ever? It is true, those who have offended against the superior light, and benignant invitations of the gospel, will bring themselves into sorer condemnation. To offend against the richest displays of mercy, is the most atrocious of all offences, but it cannot *exhaust* this mercy. There is a possibility, and a high probability, that whenever the severer discipline they will deserve and require, shall have answered the genuine purpose of all chastisement, the Universal Parent will also find out a way for their escape, in a manner adapted to his character, and their necessities.

Another argument, encouraging the hope that the final happiness of all the moral and intelligent offspring of God, is an essential part of the divine plan, may be deduced from the repeated assurances given, that Christ shall

reign, and exercise his spiritual dominion, until he shall have subdued the two great enemies, SIN and DEATH. The empire of righteousness is to be an universal empire. The kingdom of Christ cannot be universal, before he shall have triumphed over all opposition. Wickedness is the opponent to righteousness, and misery to happiness. Nor can we consider the Captain of our salvation as completely triumphant, unless he shall be able to conquer *Death* and *Destruction*; which, although they may not be equivalent to absolute misery, they are certainly inimical to universal felicity. We are assured, that the last enemy to be destroyed, is *death* itself; because, by the introduction of universal holiness, all the purposes of death will be answered; and when death is destroyed, glory, honour, immortality, must universally prevail.

It cannot be said, in a sense most worthy of the Deity, that *wickedness* will be destroyed by the destruction of the *persons* of the wicked. This is an attempt too frequently made by fallible men; but it is not the most consistent with the character of an universal parent, who, from the commencement of our existence, knows our frames, with their numerous imperfections. God loved this world, even in its sinful and depraved state. He manifests his benevolence to the wicked

every day and every hour. He incessantly communicates the blessings which they incessantly abuse. Those whom he once loved, he must love to the end. Their nature and their exigencies, their powers of suffering and of enjoying, remain the same; and with him there can be no variableness or change of character. The formidable enemies to be completely conquered, are *Sin* and *Misery* themselves, and not the *persons* of the sinners. This could have been effected in an instant; and the long process observable under both dispensations, would not have been requisite. His conquest will consist in subduing the *Heart*. He will bring men to the obedience of faith, in a manner corresponding with the laws of their moral nature. They are to be a *willing* people in the day of his power; not by any violent or miraculous exertion of this power, but by the slower process of cause and effect, both moral and physical. Those who are by their impenitence treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath, may experience that tribulation and anguish, which shall finally subdue their obstinacy, and purify their hearts. Although much greater afflictions may be their portion, than the greatest evils they may have suffered in the present state of trial, and these may be of longer duration,

yet some of the ages of eternity may be sufficient for the purpose of final reformation, of the most depraved of the human species. When this end shall be obtained, then shall the prince of the power of the air be destroyed, and the evil spirit working in the children of disobedience, be completely subdued: then shall the empire of Jesus be complete in the eyes of the universe: then, according to the strong figurative language of Scripture, shall the devil and his agents be cast into the bottomless pit, never to rise and seduce to all eternity: then, and not till then, shall rejoicing be as extensive and universal as the creatures of God: then may every intelligent creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, say, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb for ever and ever!"

The expectation of an ultimate recovery of all mankind to virtue and happiness, would, assuredly, be peculiarly grateful to those who are the warmest advocates for the infinitude of Christ's atoning merits, could their conceptions of some particular phrases in Scripture, permit them to indulge the thoughts. They maintain

that it was necessary for the Saviour of mankind to be God, the infinite God, as well as the Son of Man, that he might become a full expiatory sacrifice for sin. Yet, they must allow, that to believe in the eternal misery of a great majority of the human race, is to believe in a doctrine which in no way corresponds with this plenitude of merit. Will they not joyfully embrace such an interpretation of passages, which, according to their mode of explaining them, must be inimical to their favourite opinion, as shall effectually remove the difficulty, and restore harmony to their sentiments? When they allege that the presence of the eternal God was necessary, to give an infinite efficacy to the sacrifice of Christ, it is much more consistent with their principles to admit, that the effects shall be infinite also. Can they suffer the idea, that the grace of God should be limited to the small number of the elect, when they must acknowledge that his efficacy is in itself infinite and unbounded? *Limited* salvation, procured by an *infinite* satisfaction, is a palpable inconsistency. Let them revise the few, very few, metaphorical passages, on which they have built the horrid system of misery; and let their zeal for the Redeemer, united with the feelings of humanity, induce them to give a milder interpreta-

tion, by which all men may be saved, and his triumphs over sin and misery will be rendered complete.

Nor does the unlimited phraseology prevalently used by our Saviour and his Apostle, accord so well with the doctrine of partial, as with that of universal, redemption. It is the *World* that is to be saved, "God so loved the *World*:" "We know that he is the Christ the Saviour of the *World*." "I came not to judge, but to save the *World*." "He is the propitiation for the sins of the *World*," &c.

This kind of language, incessantly repeated, encourages the hope, that the blessing will be as extensive as the phraseology; that there are other sheep which may not belong to the present flock, who shall hereafter be gathered together, forming one fold under the good shepherd: that he who wills that all men should be saved and be brought to the knowledge of the truth, shall ultimately see his will accomplished, through the mediation of him who "gave himself a ransom for *all, to be testified in due time*."

Are such strong assurances and encouraging declarations, to be chilled by contracted and evasive explanations? Can we readily admit that the hopes which are beginning to expand in favour of the whole human race, shall be shrivelled

up into the world of the *Elect* only; into mere *specimens* of what the grace of God is able to accomplish, if the purposes of grace did not check themselves? Are we to suffer quibbling distinctions, as some divines in a preceding age have done, between the *secret* and *revealed* will of God, and make the former contradict the latter, and that in favour, of either *eternal misery*, or of irremediable *death* and *destruction?* In our earthly courts, when the punishment is frequently tremendous, for offences comparatively trivial, humanity does occasionally connive at pitiful evasions, in favour of *mercy*; but will they be practised in the court of heaven, to support a cause that has the appearance of implacable *resentment*, as its basis?

The first part of the present disquisition affords the most ample testimonies of the abundant riches of divine grace. We have contemplated the tender affection of a parent for his intelligent offspring, and unremitted solicitude for their welfare. In the second part, we think that we have unanswerably proved, that the state of condemnation from which the universal parent determined to rescue us, by the intermediation of his Son, is the condemnation of Death; by

which we might justly have been excluded from the regions, or the inheritance, of eternal bliss. But can we suppose that the affection of the parent is totally extinguished, by the ingratitude and thoughtlessness of a succeeding race of men? Or are their offences so disproportionate, that while the demerits of the one solely exposed them to the loss of life, the demerits of the other should incur irremediable woe, or protracted torments, before they will receive the last *coup de grace*, the extinction of their being? Must the neglected covenant of *grace* be thus avenged for the sins of the impenitent? Or can the universal Parent withdraw the character, and consent to give up any of his children to misery and destruction, because they have not reformed, in their passage through this short state of existence, where they were exposed to many temptations, and subjected to many adventitious circumstances, over which they had no power? Can they have exhausted or annihilated infinite mercy, by these transient offences against it? May they not still be the sheep of another fold who shall hear his voice; "whom he must also bring, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd?"

A belief that it is the plan of God, finally to render all his rational offspring permanently

happy, is the best, and, in our opinion, the only method of vindicating the divine justice, not merely in the diversities, and lamented inequalities, observable in this world, but also in the means of preparing for a future state of happiness. The gradual progress from ignorance, inexperience, barbarian, or savage manners, necessarily demands various inequalities, by which numbers will be made to suffer many evils, from which others, much less meritorious, may, for the present, escape. Such inequalities may easily be brought to a level, in the various ages of eternity. If, as some believe, faith in Christ be necessary for the salvation of every living soul, the whole Pagan world must, without exception, become heirs of eternal condemnation, either to misery or total destruction. Notwithstanding these were ignorant and depraved, they were born to a state of ignorance, which they could not change; and they were inevitably nourished in vices and superstitions, the most abandoned and ignominious, from which no one could rationally expect them to abstain. But still they were the children of an heavenly father, compelled into existence, and condemned to all the imperfections of their state. It is very possible that numberless individuals, who in the land of Canaan were destined to destruction, because

the peculiarities of their situation precluded the natural possibility of a reformation, were in their moral characters equal, if not superior, to those very Jews, who were appointed to be the instruments of their destruction. The advocates forthe sentiments we are opposing, must be embarrassed at the severe mandates issued, to destroy a nation that was not more culpable than the other nations of the earth. But it was an *idolatrous* nation, and their peaceful vicinity would have been fatal to the grand purposes of God. They had lost their title to life, to the present state of existence, with all its blessings, by their accumulated vices. They were also totally disqualified for its pure and innocent enjoyments. They were in a state of condemnation, in common with all men; and there was no injustice in executing the sentence, at a period most consonant with the plans of Providence. If we admit a future state, both of retribution and of probation, every difficulty is removed. A full power of indemnity, for every appearance of partiality or harsh severity, remains. In this world they could not have reformed, without a miracle being wrought upon every individual heart. Their example would have rendered the children of Abraham as idolatrous as themselves; and the whole world would have remained in palpable

darkness. In another state, a new process may commence, with a happier issue. They may be born into another world, under more favourable circumstances; and they may make swifter progress in the road of virtue, which leads to happiness, than the millions of their conquerors, who have enjoyed and abused superior advantages. These ideas naturally arise from the doctrine of corrective punishments; nor are they to be treated as merely hypothetical. They are encouraged by the statement of our Saviour, when he upbraids the cities, wherein most of his mighty works had been done, because they repented not. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin; Woe unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in thee, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackloth and ashes."* Can we imagine that misery or destruction will be their final lot, whose hearts were moulded for penitence and reformation, had favourable opportunities presented themselves? To such minds shall the favourable opportunity be for ever lost?

The moral and religious advantages of some, who are born under the Gospel dispensation, are greatly superior to those of others. Their

* Matt. ix. 21.

temptations to vice are much fewer; their motives and encouragements to holiness are much stronger. Had the situations of each been reversed, and over these they had no controul, their conduct, and the consequences of their conduct, would also have been reversed. Are these to be eternally excluded from the occasions and situations, which might be productive of infinite advantages? Are such inequalities in the destiny of men to be everlasting? Is this to be expected from the universl father; or consistent with that nice balance of distributive justice, which our future judge assures us will be observed in the world of retribution?—Again,

The doctrine of the never-ceasing misery of the wicked, and also that of their final annihilation, plunges a large diversity of characters into one common ruin. Those who are not prepared for the *perfection* of bliss, must be consigned over to everlasting condemnation. A system this, in which no human intellect can discover either wisdom, justice, or mercy. All is confusion and amazement! No indemnification can be admitted for those unequal distributions of Providence, which are incessantly the subjects of surprise or complaint! No diversity of treatment, accord-

ing to gradations of demerit! No opportunities of reform can be allowed to those, who, according to the declaration of our Saviour, would have repented, if such opportunities had been enjoyed! These doctrines terminate for ever the plan of Providence respecting the whole human race. They enable us to judge of the *whole*; and we cannot forbear lamenting its obvious imperfections. Even a *peradventure* is precluded by an assumed certainty, from which there can be no appeal. A *possibility* of a more desirable issue would, at least, alleviate despair, suspend objections, and inspire some distant hope, that as the judge of all the earth must do right, this right will ultimately be beneficial to the whole universe of God.

If the eternal misery of any portion of the human species, or their final destruction, after sufferings to which there are no parallels upon earth, be doctrines according to truth, then is the *propagation of the human species to be placed among the most atrocious of crimes.* No man who pretends to justice or humanity would purchase a transient gratification, under the *possibility* of involving any other persons in absolute ruin. A *probability* of this, would render him highly culpable; and a *certainty* would excite

indignation. But for any one to expose his *own offspring* to such wretchedness, would be an enormity that wants a name. The malignity of vice consists in the evil it produces; and its malignity increases in exact proportion to the number, greatness, and perpetuity of these evils. A parent who seeks his own gratifications, to the cold neglect of his children, respecting the comforts of this life, is despised; and should he indulge himself, under a *certainty* of their being exposed to great and terrible misfortunes, he would be deemed a monster. But how trivial and insignificant the crime of inducing such evils, compared with that which is committed by the zealous advocates for the misery, or even the painful destruction, of myriads of the human race, when, by their connubial engagements, they augment the number? How shameful the indulgence of those passions, which bring into existence beings who are born under the wrath of God, and natural heirs of eternal damnation! It is well known that the grace of God does not operate according to blood. It is acknowledged, that the most religious education will not ensure the eternal welfare of their offspring; and, should their offspring be numerous, they cannot, in consistency with their principles, expect the salvation of *all*, or of the *greater* number. How

more than rash, how *sinful*, must be their conduct, who seek their own personal gratifications, with such a risk, with such a barbarous foresight? with the *moral certainty* that they are propagating the misery of those very beings, for whom they feel such strong affections; and for whose felicity they would sacrifice their own lives! Let them compare the horrid evils they perpetuate, with the momentary injuries induced by the voluptuary, in his greatest excesses! If they appreciate character and conduct according to these principles, they will either be compelled to consider celibacy as an incumbent duty, or to renounce their creed! To conclude,

It is in the nature of benevolence to desire the happiness of others. It is in the nature of benevolence to expand to universality. It cannot be confined to parties, to numbers, to the rigid claims of right, or to our immediate connections in the social intercourse. Its sphere of action is unlimited; and it spreads in every direction. True benevolence, although it hath the least of *Self* in its motives, is more productive of self complacency than any other moral principle. This complacency accompanies our ardent *desires* to do good; it accompanies the *perception* of an adaptation of our plans to the accomplishment of the object; and it accom-

panies the *benefits* derived from success. Should human weakness, or human imperfections, render our benevolent designs abortive, self-complacency will still remain to soothe our regret at the failure. A benevolent heart is the choicest gift of heaven; for it is most useful to others, and most conducive to the enjoyments of the possessor. What the Deity has thus communicated to man, he possesses and enjoys in the richest abundance. It constitutes the perfection of his character: and must be the choicest ingredient in his felicity. To imitate this attribute to the utmost in our power, is the only method in which we can attempt to obey the commands of our Saviour, "be ye perfect, as your father who is in heaven is perfect." When it is asserted that the Deity is independent of his creatures for happiness, and when his felicity is ascribed to the contemplation of his own perfections, it cannot be supposed that he would have been eternally and equally happy, had no creature existed, to whom he could have imparted happiness. For it is impossible to conceive from what sources his supreme felicity could be derived, exclusive of his relative character. Without this, he would dwell in solitude, inhabiting the immensity of space, immutably inactive, destitute of plan or

execution! A felicity which is most independent of other beings, must also have its source, its causes; and its richest sources may easily be perceived in the pleasure of incessantly doing good, in promoting happiness. Nor can this be inconsistent with the most perfect independence; for he is the Creator of all, and whatever he imparts or receives is equally his own work. It is the grand characteristic of the divine benevolence, which is exercised in this his relative character, that it enstamps a value upon the infinitude of his knowledge, inspires complacency in the exercise of his infinite wisdom, and entitles him to rejoice in the uncontrouled exercise of his sovereign power. The more perfectly these attributes are operative, the more extensive must be the sources of the divine felicity. From these premises may we not safely conclude, that the happiness of the Deity could not be complete, if any subject of his moral government, if an individual among his intellectual offspring, were to be eternally miserable? In such a case, he would be compelled eternally to contemplate some monument of his own defects! Nor could this eternity re-echo to the declaration made at the commencement of time, that when he made the world, God saw that *it was good.* The absolute sovereignty, so assiduously ascribed to the

Deity, cannot operate to the restriction of his own good will to all; for, with reverence be it said, it would operate to the diminution of his own happiness! Were he compelled to be influenced by the abstract idea of his own personal dues, as some are bold to maintain, he would too nearly resemble empassioned man, who so frequently sacrifices the choicest enjoyments of benevolence, to the more turbid gratifications of resentment. How much more worthy of God, and of every man who believes in a God, is the conviction, that the benevolence which is inexhaustible, will ultimately diffuse universal happiness! Such a display of sovereignty, finally triumphant over the moral depravity of his free agent man, possesses a charm which all must admire, all must adore! It manifests the triumph of mercy, over the strict demands of justice! It proves, demonstratively proves, that his mercy endureth for ever!

Let any one compare this statement with the language of those who make arbitrary and capricious Will, the grand principle of action. A Will that is determined to act in the most oppressive manner, though myriads should be rendered infinitely miserable by it decrees; and then decide, which has the broad mark of *rashness*, enstampt upon it.!*

* See Note O.

Among the abettors of sentiments, which appear to us so unworthy of the Deity, are numbers who strenuously oppose the innocence of speculative errors. They place a mistaken opinion, upon a level with a conscious violation of the divine commands; and they urge it upon those who entertain sentiments which they deem to be impious or dangerous, to renounce them, as the most effectual method of flying from the wrath to come. But as these theologians are not infallible in their own right; as they cannot adduce proofs that they possess the infallible Spirit of God, conducting them into all truths, exclusively; as they acknowledge that man, in his fallen state, is rendered prone to err, incapable of thinking a good thought, as well as performing a good action, do they never tremble for themselves? What error can be more dreadful, or more derogatory to the divine character, than their own, supposing their sentiments should prove erroneous? Should those who plead for the eternal felicity of all the rational creatures of God, from a persuasion that the doctrine is most consonant with a revelation, whose characteristics are grace and mercy, and most honourable to the divine attributes, should they commit a mistake, they may plead, that they were misled by their desire to vindicate the choicest attribute of the Deity; and by

presuming, that mercy would be more efficacious and extensive in its operations, than facts have realized. They may still hope, that this mercy will not everlastingly condemn them, for so honourable an error. But what apology can *they* make, should their sentiments be condemned as a *libel* upon the Universal Parent? representing him as being influenced by a principle of action, in which nothing is conspicuous, but personal resentment and vindictive power? In this alarming state, the intercessor will again have to plead, "Father forgive them, for they knew not what they did."

But it has been urged, that the doctrine of the final happiness of all men, and even that of the annihilation of the wicked, will render mankind still more careless and indifferent about the concerns of religion, than they are at present; that they will gratify their inordinate passions and propensities without restraint, consoling themselves with the hopes that they shall finally be saved; or at least sink into a state of inconsciousness and oblivion.

It may be answered, in the first place, that it does not become us to dictate to the all-wise God, the manner in which sinners can be the most

effectually addressed. We have no authority to act as interpreters, by giving an absolute, definite sense, to expressions which he has chosen to make indefinite. We may safely leave to him the protection of his own plans. If reason itself has been expected to bow before opinions, which some wise and learned men have conceived to be absurd, or derogatory to the divine attributes, because others have deemed them to be the doctrines of scripture, surely it is a much easier task not to exceed the language of scripture, in the denunciations of vengeance upon the ungodly.

We have already shown, that those passages upon which the system of eternal misery is founded, are extremely few, and that they are metaphorical in their construction. We may farther observe, that they were occasional expressions, or quotations, uttered by our Saviour *alone*. They were not succeeded by any injunctions given to his disciples, to preach *eternal misery* to the world, when he sent them forth to preach the Gospel; which must have been the case, had the Saviour of the world considered it as an essential part of his mission, to reveal this doctrine. The Apostles were commissioned to intreat sinners to repent, by the mercies of God, and the compassionate suffer-

ings of the Son of God, and to warn the impenitent, that they are subjecting themselves to greater indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, than were experienced by the sinners of ancient times; but they have not ventured to describe, in explicit language, or with a positive tone, the nature or duration of these punishments; and we should act wisely to imitate their cautious example.

To speak after the manner of men, the Supreme Being manifested infinite concern for the welfare of his people Israel. He invited, intreated, admonished, remonstrated, threatened; but the expectations of their obedience, or their reform, rested entirely upon the good or evil that should be their portion in the present life. There was no attempts to terrify them into obedience, by the denunciation of eternal woes. Nor were these ideas introduced into the christian church, until some speculative philosophers intermixed their visions with the Gospel of Christ. They had no existence, until metaphorical language was interpreted into a literal sense. The primitive converts repented, upon the revelation of a future state of retribution, in which every man shall receive according to his works. They were induced to reform, by the promise of eternal life, on the one hand, and the undefined

threatening of just punishment to the finally impenitent, on the other.

But could we suppose that mankind would, in the present day, be rendered more careless and abandoned, because their future misery will not be eternal, their indifference might justly be ascribed to the presumptuous officiousness of those theologians, who have thus blunted the edge of the divine judgments, by attempting to sharpen them; and have rendered those threatenings comparative trifles, in the opinion of their hearers, which the Being who uttered them knows to be momentous. However, attention to the laws of human nature will alleviate such apprehensions. The certain expectation of a *known* evil always affects the mind more powerfully, than general threats of an evil that is totally unknown, and apparently remote. A criminal will be terrified at the *lash*, although he does not fear *everlasting stripes*. He knows that, in a short time, his bodily pain will terminate, and that he may be able hereafter to conceal his shame; but he cannot look through the sufferings before him, into these consolations. No one will be reconciled to the horrors of a prison, because they are to endure but a few years, or because he knows that death will finally release him; nor will he expose himself to the *brand-*

mark, because the agony will not be perpetual. No impression can be made upon those who will not consider, and those who consider, are chiefly affected with the *certainty that they cannot escape condign punishment.*

But the experiment has been tried for the space of many centuries, and this doctrine has not produced the effects which had been expected. Its terrors have, in various ways, been artfully evaded. Some, who have believed it, have thought that no small degree of efficacy consisted in receiving the doctrine as an indispensable article of faith. They have expected an exemption from eternal misery, by a strenuous belief in the doctrine itself; and have hoped for mercy, by persecuting those who ventured to assert, that a God of infinite benignity will not render any of his creatures eternally wretched. Multitudes have heard these threats reiterated, until they became insensible to them, and their hearts were completely hardened against every other consideration. The oaths and dreadful imprecations, hourly uttered by the reprobate, against themselves, and each other, too loudly proclaim the inefficacy of the doctrine. Some, who would deem it extremely dangerous to deny the eternity of hell torments, attempt to extinguish the flames, by the obser-

vance of superstitious rites of their own invention, and submitting to austerities of their own infliction. As the doctrine itself represents the true God, in a character which resembles that ascribed to the heathen deities, it was not unnatural to expect, that adopting the methods practiced by pagan worshippers, might also render him propitious; and every subterfuge has accordingly been employed, rather than to submit to the severer penance, of "denying all ungodliness, and every wordly lust," in order to escape the misery they professed to dread. Multitudes have considered the punishment of everlasting misery so disproportionate to their guilt, that the most abandoned have secretly indulged the hopes of escaping. Nature prompts every rational creature of God, to trust in his mercy. Numbers will not, cannot, believe, that he is so implacable as their creed has taught them. They will hope that he cannot retain his anger for ever; and they are prone also to consider an escape from eternal wretchedness, as an acquittal from every degree of punishment.

But some divines themselves are fostering such dangerous delusions. Their compassionate hearts shudder at their own principles; and they have humanely devised a prompt method of saving the most profligate sinner from eternal

wrath. Although they represent sin to be of so malignant a nature, that all the flames of hell cannot, through myriads of ages, purify the polluted soul, yet a *simple act of faith*, in a crucified Saviour, at the moment of nature's dissolution, or with the terrors of death before their eyes, is sufficient to appease the wrath of God, and effect a change in the heart, to which the chastisement of ages would be incompetent! By this single act, which is manifestly an act of terror, upon which no dependance can be made, the soul becomes instantly purified, as by a charm, and is prepared for the enjoyment of the bliss reserved for the righteous, in a kingdom of righteousness, equally with those who, in humble obedience to the divine commands, have been working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, for a series of years, through numberless trials, afflictions, and anxieties of heart! Nay, so omnipotent is this species of faith, in the opinion of some divines, that wretches, who have been notoriously placed among the workers of iniquity, for a series of years; and whose atrocious crimes have, perhaps, brought them to a premature and ignominious death; will be received by the holy Jesus, with the salutation, "Well done, thou

good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of your Lord!"

Who does not perceive that such incongruities destroy each other? That those who are most alarmed at the tremendous consequences of disbelieving this doctrine, have invented a method of annihilating all its horrors? Sudden conversions, eagerly urged, and as eagerly complied with, and which every wicked man will thus be encouraged to expect, will not only appease the wrath of God, beyond the power of endless torments, but will answer all the purposes of habitual virtue and piety! Can those be faithful, either to their trust, or to their principles, who, after they have assiduously fenced round the holy paradise of God, with all the flames of hell, that nothing which defileth may enter, thus to encourage miscreants to break through the flames, that they may place themselves at the right hand of the throne of the most high, by one hasty act of faith?*

We have asserted, that if such reiterated threats do not alarm and terrify to repentance, they harden the heart without a remedy. The assertion will be the more readily believed, when we advert to the effects of the doctrine of everlast-

* See Note P.

ing misery upon some of its most strenuous supporters; who, supposing themselves to be secure respecting their own salvation, have permitted their system to render their hearts callous, respecting the irremediable woe of others. They speak, with systematic coolness, of the numberless souls who will suffer eternal damnation, without having seen the light of the sun, or been placed in a state of trial! They maintain that, in consequence of the fatal transgression of our first parents, those who have never enjoyed consciousness in this life, shall awaken to the consciousness of everlasting woe in the future state; and still they cherish, with no small degree of fondness, the system upon which they found their principles! Other divines have most inhumanely conjectured, that the felicity of the blessed will be greatly augmented by the ineffectual groans of the damned. A sentiment this, not unworthy of the most savage barbarian, uttered at a moment of frantic rage; and who places his diabolic delight in the writhing agonies of his enemies!*

May we not suspect that such extravagances are permitted, in order to demonstrate that so terrible a doctrine, is ineffectual to meliorate the heart? Could the mild and compas-

* See Note Q.

sionate Jesus have submitted to the agony of preaching such sentiments, who wept over the *temporal* calamities, which he saw impending over Judea?

Thus have we fully proved that the moral influence of the doctrine does not entitle it to respect; and that virtue will not be alarmed at the rejection of it.

If it were an admitted principle that no one doctrine can be of importance, which has not a correspondent influence on the mind, Divines would not be so strenuous for the doctrine under consideration. It is extremely happy for all mankind that it has not, that it cannot have, an influence correspondentto its tremendous nature. This would introduce universal dismay. The torments of hell would commence upon earth, nor could an individual entirely escape their agonies. How great are the terrors excited by the apprehensions of war, and all its devastation; by the probability of pestilence and famine! What a dismay do these create in every breast! Yet what are these? A single grain to a mountain, a drop of the bucket to an immense ocean, a mote to the universe! Were our fears to augment in proportion to the difference; were we to reflect upon the myriads and myriads of ages, destined to misery, to the

total exclusion of hope; and advert to the possibility of its being our own lot; every son of Adam would be driven into despair, which must terminate in insanity! The two words *eternity*, and *misery*, run as smoothly across the mind, in the eagerness of disputation, as any other two words of equal length. But let disputants suspend the argument, to contemplate the nature of MISERY! It is not merely the loss of that happiness which the soul of every man ardently desires, but it is an anguish, compared, from its excruciating nature, to the gnawing of worms upon a vital part, or the operation of fire, upon a frame exquisitely sensible! The *probability* of sufferings like these, would fill the mind with dread. The *certainty* of their being inflicted, for a short space in human life, would render the whole of life an intolerable burden. ETERNITY! Have systematics calculated the length of its duration? Have they permitted their ideas to extend themselves to the state of a single individual, millions of ages hence, continuing in unremitted torture, with an undiminished eternity still before him? Could any one enjoy tranquillity of mind, while he was contemplating this agonizing state of a fellow-creature? Certainly not. He would quickly dismiss the subject, in compassion to his own feelings. But the

insensibility thus purchased, will not furnish a drop of water to cool the tongue of the parched sinner. It still leaves him in misery!

But were the virtuous and pious habitually to live under the vivid impression of this horrid tenet, life would be a perpetual burden. Strong, indeed, must be the confidence in their own security, to be free from the most dreadful apprehensions concerning themselves. A consciousness of their imperfections would too frequently place them upon the brink of eternal torments. And as no gradations of time are allowed, proportionate to the gradations of demerit, by this all-confounding system, he that is not perfectly prepared for perfect happiness, can have no other expectation than to be plunged into the abyss of eternal misery!

Again, could the devout Christian be absolutely certain of his own salvation, he must be in perpetual agonies for every object of his affections; for his friends, and relatives; for his beloved offspring. He would not discern in them all, such a perfection of character, as might alleviate his fearful apprehensions, that they were not redeemed from the eternal wrath of God. He is frequently solicitous about their worldly prosperity. He bitterly laments their occasional sufferings. His sensations from

these *passing* evils, are sometimes too keen for the enjoyment of his life. Let these painful sensations be augmented in proportion to the difference between time and eternity, and then let us judge of the state of his mind.

Even that degree of horror which seizes the mind, when it deeply reflects upon the subject, renders the majority of those Divines who reject not the tenet, reluctant to expatiate upon it. They either omit it altogether in their discourses, or it is mentioned in a cursory and uninfluential manner. Nay, they are disposed to censure such preachers as have more zeal and less sensibility, through an apprehension that they are acting contrary to the mild and gracious spirit of the gospel.

There are but two ways in which such a subject can be practically treated; these are the perpetual, but indefinite denunciation of eternal woe and misery, without being explicit concerning the nature of this woe; or to stretch the imagination, in order to find out degrees and diversities of torments, which shall be adapted to the different classes of sinners, during the endless ages of eternity. This is an exertion at which humanity revolts. But without such a detail, the doctrine sinks into all the inertness of a mere speculative opinion. We are so constituted that we require some degree

of amplification, respecting the calamities of this sublunary world, which are not within the reach of our observation. We can hear and read of a large mass of horror, concerning which the information is conveyed in general terms, without very painful emotions. The imprisonment or the captivity of thousands, and the slaughter of tens of thousands of our fellow creatures, with whom we have no personal connection, makes not an impression upon our feelings, equal to a minute description of the distresses which are suffered by a single individual. The mind is only affected by what it can grasp, and it must distinctly explore the component parts of misery to be duly affected by it. Each circumstance contributing its distinct effect, will finally produce a powerful aggregate. It was upon this principle that the divine lawgiver did not confine himself to the general declaration, that the Israelites should enjoy worldly prosperity, or suffer national calamity, according to their conduct, in the land of which they were about to take possession. But he enters into a most encouraging, and a most alarming detail of the circumstances which will constitute their happiness or misery. "And it shall come to pass if thou hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all

his commandments, which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God shall set the on high, above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field: blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy wine, and the flocks of thy sheep, &c. &c. &c.

"But it shall come to pass that, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, &c. cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field: — The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, the Lord shall make pestilence cleave unto thee; the Lord shall smite the with consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew," &c. &c. &c. &c.*

The impressions made by these denunciations must have been, at the period, inexpressibly great upon the whole body of the people, far exceeding the denunciations of eternal misery in the present day.

* See Deut. ch. xxviii.

We endeavoured, upon a former occasion, to prove the necessity of terror to awaken the guilty and impenitent. It is in vain to expatiate upon the beauty of virtue, before those who are strangers to every other beauty but the gratification of their inordinate passions. Nor is the covenant of grace itself destitute of those terrors which are calculated to alarm the ungodly. The inspired reformers of the world, assure them that they are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgments of God; that misery is in all their ways; that those who offend against the light of the gospel, deserve and shall receive sorer punishment than those who despised the law of Moses; and that it shall be more tolerable for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of judgment than for them. By these indefinite expressions they leave the imagination to work; and they alarm within the boundaries of reason and justice. The conscience of every wicked man admits, that he deserves not the recompense of the righteous, nor the peace of innocence. He knows that he deserves punishment; but he revolts at the thoughts of a punishment beyond measure, and beyond bounds, for finite offences. The absolute certainty that an offender cannot possibly escape some unknown punishment, will

produce a deeper and more lasting impression, than exaggerated threatenings, which excite his doubts. But a persuasion that the punishment is strictly just, that it will not exceed the consciousness of guilt, will greatly contribute to the removal of all doubts. In this case, the mind can no longer take refuge in those honourable sentiments which it is willing to entertain and to pervert, concerning the divine justice. The assurance that the future punishments, however great and terrible they may be, are no other than the necessary, but salutary chastisements of the heavenly father; will destroy every false expectation; and instruct the offender to measure the enormity of his crimes, by the severity of these requisite chastisements, inflicted by him who wills the salvation of all men.

Although to expatiate upon the eternal tortures of the impenitent wicked is too horrid to be borne, yet many are the subjects connected with future punishments, which demand the minutest consideration. The imagination may enlarge upon many tremendous circumstances, without exceeding the bounds of probability; and the imagination thus employed, may give a favourable check to those vain

imaginations which incessantly delude the wicked. That the natural consequences of vice are misery, is a truth known to every moralist. He has learned it from his remarks on the depraved, and the experience of the depraved assures them, that he is not mistaken. Every wicked man knows that he has the seeds of misery within himself; that in every vicious indulgence he is passing through momentary gratification, into fatal and permanent consequences, where repentance and remorse will be his companions. Let his imagination place him in some unknown region, where his sinful enjoyments will be no more, and all their wretched consequences will remain; where none of the artifices of dissipation can prevent the worm from perpetually gnawing, or quench the incessant flames of his anguish. Let him advert to the important fact, that the supreme Being in all his operations, hath always employed physical means to promote his plans, to the extent of their efficacy, however slow the process. If the righteous be destined, in the present state, to pass through many tribulations, before they enter into their heavenly inheritance, the wicked in their individual capacities, may be expected to pass through many more, in the future state, before their qualification may commence,

or be duly advanced. The moral history of this world informs us that, of collective bodies, the progress in moral improvement has always been extremely slow ; and that without the advancement of the *whole*, the felicity of reformed individuals must be incomplete.

Nine hundred years were consumed, before the propensity of the human race to the grossest idolatry, was in any degree restrained. Upwards of *eighteen hundred years* have elapsed, and the great majority of mankind, continue strangers to that religion, upon which all the hopes of future felicity must depend ; and many of its professed admirers, have not only impeded its salutary effects, by their officious intermixtures, but have rendered it an engine of oppressions, hatreds, and animosities ; compelling those who have followed after righteousness, to encounter every species of misery and distress, during their sojourn in the present state. In a world destined for the reception of the assembled wicked, how many periods may be exhausted, before their polluted souls shall be prepared to enjoy that happiness which is the result and the reward of distinguished piety and virtue !

It is possible that, in a future state, the bad consequences issuing from evil deeds, shall be perceived, and deeply lamented, without the

hopes of any other remedy, than such as may be appointed to operate slowly, in order to operate effectually. It is possible, that negligent and vicious parents may severely suffer; from the perception of the misery they have inflicted upon their own offspring; and their bitter remorse may continue as long as the evil shall exist. We are assured, that those who have committed comparatively few sins, shall be beaten with few stripes. The egregious offenders will be punished with many. It is possible that these stripes will be proportioned to the extent of the miseries they may have diffused, and they may endure as long as the consequences of their vices shall continue to operate; inevitably diminishing that satisfiaction which might result from the perception of their own moral improvement. If positions like these cannot lay claim to certainty, they are within the limits of reason. They are in conformity with our ideas of retributive justice, and they are calculated to alarm the most unthinking mind.

Again that very doctrine which is supposed to be necessary for the conversion of sinners, occasions great multitudes to continue in their sins. Those who maintain that every unbeliever will suffer never-ending misery, should be peculiarly cautious not to increase their num-

ber. But this dogma is one grand cause of infidelity, and exposes the unbeliever to all those irregularities which infidelity is prone to authorize. Men who are taught by the light of reason to renounce this doctrine, and yet are taught by Theologians, that it is an essential article of the Christian faith, will think themselves fully justified in renouncing the whole of Christianity. The rational being who admires the beauties of the creation, and adores the benevolence which is there displayed towards all men indiscriminately, is astonished that the very God who shews so much indulgence to the wicked, in the present state, should be represented as pouring out the vials of eternal wrath upon them in a future world; under a dispensation which is emphatically termed a *covenant of grace!* He turns from such glad tidings of great joy, with horror and indignation; and being ignorant of the true design of Christianity, he becomes a determined unbeliever. These are historical facts. They are known to exist in every country in Europe. They will increase, in proportion as the minds of men become emancipated from implicit faith, in their spiritual instructors, and they will continue until the gospel shall appear to them, "to be more worthy of all acceptation."

Finally, we must remark that the doctrine of the eternal misery of the wicked is very inimical to those devout affections, which it is our duty and our happiness to cultivate, towards the God of transcendent excellence. We are commanded to "love the Lord our God, with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our strength, and with all our minds." These are glowing expressions, uttered by him who was in the bosom of his father, and who hath revealed him unto us; expressions which manifest how supremely he deserves our love, because he alone is supremely good. It is the attribute of essential Goodness on which the duty is founded; it is this which renders it a most rational and a most pleasant duty. But is it possible for those to perform the duty aright, and to the due extent of the grateful feelings, who are habituated, by their creed, to consider the author of their being as an object of terror? We cannot love whom we please, and to the degree that we please, merely because we are commanded. Nor can the affection be called forth to a due extent, by a general indefinite acknowledgement that he is good. We cannot feel a warm affection for any human being, or an admiration of his character, until we are made acquainted with some extraordinary

instances of his superiority; and as these abound, will our love and admiration increase. Thus the simple proposition that God is good, may inspire a degree of respect, but it will not arise to the ardour of love. This affection must be called forth, and habitually cherished, by incessant manifestations of operative goodness. The more numerous, extensive, and extraordinary these, the more liberal his gifts, the more condescending his compassion, the more conspicuous his exertions for the diffusion of extensive happiness, the more shall we feel the propriety of the duty to love him with all our hearts, and with the greater facility will the duty be practised. But where munificence is limited by hypothesis, to a comparative few, and infinite severity is exercised upon the multitude, without the intervention of wisdom, or power, to prevent miseries which exceed the most vigorous imagination, men may attempt to love, and they may resolve to check feelings of an opposite character as impious, but they will not always succeed. Their religious tenets leave a deficiency somewhere, not to be expected in the character and conduct of a perfect being, which must diminish that exalted admiration they are solicitous to entertain.

Moreover, should they arrive at that perfect

love which casteth out fear, it is upon a contracted selfish principle. They can be grateful alone for *personal* favours, and admire the goodness of God in nothing so much as in his partiality to themselves. They are justly astonished that *they* should be selected from the myriads who are consigned over to eternal misery; and there is nothing to admire in this, but a sovereign act, which confounds the understanding; and in which, as there are no traces of wisdom, there can be no marks of respectability. In a word, it is inconsistent with the nature of things, and with the very constitution of the human mind, to love such a Being with that profound veneration and ardour of devotion, which are due to the wise and good Parent of the universe.

We are also commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves. But does this love harmonize with the gratitude which is so strongly excited, by a perception that others will be eternally excluded, from the transcendent blessings we are to enjoy? Will not a generous heart feel an anxious wish that others, not less deserving, might also become participants? If it feels these emotions, it must also feel an astonishment that God should implant them in the heart of man, and not act upon so worthy a principle

himself! It must perceive that its benevolent dispositions exceed those which we ascribe to our Maker! If such desires are not entertained, then is the heart hardened by the system; for it can contemplate the eternal reprobation of the millions, with a phlegmatic indifference! But historical facts innumerable inform us, that it has been rendered still more obdurate. Multitudes have enlisted under the banner of persecution; have hated men, because they supposed them to be hated by God; and have aspired to the honour of wielding the exterminating sword, which was to send their fellow immortals into eternal misery! How different the sensations excited by such a creed, compared with the humble and benevolent hope of that Christian, who, while he laments that the wicked should turn away from their duty and their happiness, still rejoices that *his* God is *their* God, *his* Redeemer, will be *their* Redeemer; and though he reflects, with concern, upon the misery they will inevitably bring upon themselves, he enjoys the exquisite consolation, that their sufferings will ultimately prove corrective of their vices. What motives for composure and resignation do these expectations afford to the sympathizing friend, to the affectionate relative, to the tender and anxious parent, amidst the disorders and depravities of those whom they

love! The mind of every pious christian will learn to acquiesce in the chastisements which shall prove salutary; for he knows that the severest judgments will be inflicted, by wisdom and mercy, *for purposes of Good.*

Thus have we endeavoured to shew that the tenet, condemning the wicked to eternal misery, is not a revelation from heaven; neither is that of their absolute irrecoverable destruction. These are merely *opinions* and *inferences*, drawn either from a few occasional and metaphorical expressions, or from a misapplication of the current phraseology of the scriptures. It is most obvious that such threatenings were not denounced to transgressors under the law, who must have been equally implicated, with transgressors under the gospel. We have shewn, that the doctrine of eternal misery is rather unfavourable to the cause of religion and virtue, than the contrary; and that it is very inimical to the devout affections of the heart: that the milder doctrine of annihilation, neither terrifies from vice, nor encourages to reformation, equally with a full conviction, that extreme wretchedness must continue the inseparable companion of extreme depravity; while it administers a power to

reform, and inspires the hopes that repentance can never be in vain. It is acknowledged that obscurities, many and great, still surround this awful subject. But it is a consolation to every human being, that the God of mercy, and the Parent of the universe, hath not, by any public declaration, changed his infinite mercy into infinite wrath, or renounced his power to forgive iniquities, transgressions, and sins, at any one period of human existence.

CHAPTER IV.

Remarks on the Characteristic Evidences of Christianity.

THUS have we endeavoured, to the utmost of our abilities, to point out the peculiarities which adorn the Christian dispensation, and which render it so interesting to the whole human race. We have enquired into the great blessings it has revealed to us; in what manner, or through what medium these blessings are communicated; and we have stated the reasons on which the hopes may be indulged, that they will ultimately be extended to all the rational offspring of God.

In a former disquisition, we attempted to prove the truth of the Jewish dispensation, from the internal evidences which presented themselves in our researches; and we trust, that the scriptural view which we have taken of the christian religion, will satisfactorily evince not only its divine origin, but its superlative excellencies. It possesses all the requisites which,

upon a former occasion, have been stated as essential to the permanent happiness of man. It is perfectly consonant with the state, exigencies, powers, and capacities of man, and with the reason of all rational beings.—It cherishes the pleasant affections of love, gratitude, admiration, reverence, and hope:—it is calculated to administer consolation to every sincere worshipper, in every situation of life:—it places before us the most powerful motives to the practice of all those moral and social duties, upon which social happiness depends:—it teaches us to adore one universal sovereign, who loves virtue, hath a perfect knowledge of human conduct, is wise and just to punish and reward, and who has condescended to reveal himself to us in the character of a Parent, who seeks reconciliation with his offending offspring.

That such characteristics belong to those essential doctrines of Christianity, which we have attempted to develope, in the first part of the present disquisition, no one can reasonably deny. Few have been the objections to Christianity, deduced from those points. The grand and the most formidable objections have been levelled against particular tenets, which have been mistaken for the *essential doctrine* of our

holy religion. We have endeavoured to show that these are not *primary* truths; that they are *inferences* and *deductions* from incidental expressions, which have a reference to the primary truths, preached by our Saviour and his Apostles; and that they must be received or rejected, according to the weight of evidence, upon a deliberate and impartial enquiry. For litigated sentiments being of a more speculative nature, are not essentially necessary to the moral discipline of the mind, or the cultivation of pious affections towards God; but these are the characters inscribed upon the doctrines originally promulgated to the world as essential to salvation.

We submit our sentiments, upon two of the most important subjects of disputation, to the examination of the candid Christian. The mediatorial office of Christ, and the future state of the Wicked, constitute a part of the plan of God in the redemption of the world, whether our conceptions concerning the peculiarities of this plan be accurate or not. Concerning the person of Christ, which constitutes the favourite topic of the day, we have said nothing; because, all that is interesting to us, consists in what *he has done and suffered.* He has pointed out to us *the* manner in which we can most honour him; when he says, if "*Ye love me, keep*

my commandments." "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you; greater love hath no man than this, that a manlay down his life for his friend; ye are my friend, if ye do whatsoever I command you." "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." *Character, dispositions,* and *conduct,* are the sole objects of love; nor is it possible that any mistakes concerning natures and essences, will alienate from the humble Christian, the affections either of the Father, or of the Son, if he loves them and keeps their commandments. The sentiments we have advanced, upon the other subjects, appear to be accurately Scriptural, and to be most honourable to God, most honourable to the Saviour, most interesting to mankind.

As some of these sentiments may be novel, we have been very ample in the statements of our evidences. We cannot conceive by what arguments, either from reason or Scripture, such evidences can be enfeebled; and we sincerely hope, from our love to mankind, that the attempt will be unsuccessful.

When we were treating of the filial confidence of a Christian, we observed, that one characteristic of a rational faith, consists in its being founded upon a solid basis; that it is not an arbitrary unauthorized expectation, or a conjectural hope. We may now ask, whether the faith of a Christian be not built upon such a foundation? Whether the internal evidences of Christianity be not irresistibly strong? Whether the doctrines revealed, be not true sayings, and worthy of all acceptation?

We have farther to observe, that from the survey which has been taken of both dispensations, they manifestly form a combined evidence of the truth of each. They mutually support and corroborate each other. A unity of design is conspicuous in each. *Together*, they form a *whole*. The Jewish religion was a necessary introduction to Christianity; and Christianity is the consummation of the Jewish. The one was the foundation, the ground work; the other is the magnificent superstructure. They are both perfect in their kind, accomplishing the objects proposed. They are each respectively adapted to the different ages of the world, and to the peculiar states and character of its inhabitants. In the Jewish history, we learn the

deep ignorance and depravity of the human species; and we trace the means perseveringly pursued for a series of ages, gradually to produce a due reformation. These means were either natural, or supernatural, as contingent circumstances demanded; and we trace the direction of providence, in the course of events which prepared the way for the advent of the promised Messiah.

This coincidence is abundantly displayed, and the evidence it contains, abundantly strengthened, by the accomplishment of several prophecies, recorded in the ancient Scriptures. For minute particulars, we must refer to those writers who have made the ancient prophecies the peculiar objects of study. We shall only observe, that several of these prophecies were sufficiently explicit to awaken, in the Jewish people, the expectation, that some extraordinary person would appear, at a future period, in the character of a deliverer. The time of his appearance, his moral excellencies, his humiliation, his sufferings, his exaltation to honour, the light and knowledge that should be communicated to the Gentile world, were portrayed in a manner sufficiently explicit to render them applicable to the person and office of the Messiah, and to him alone. As the destruction of the Babylonish

and Assyrian empires, and of the surrounding nations, who had persecuted the Jewish nation, had been foretold and accomplished, to the conviction of the later inhabitants of Judea; thus the destruction of this nation, as a political body, and the dispersion of the remaining tribes, upon their national rejection of the promised Messiah, were predicted in language equally explicit, to the conviction of every believer in Christianity, in the present day, and to the amazement of unbelievers.

When the fulness of time was come, in which he who was spoken of by the prophets, was appointed to make his appearance, it was necessary for him to convince the world, by some supernatural tokens, that he also was a prophet sent from God; and *the* prophet, whose advent was expected by the Jewish nation. For, although it was obviously the law, which had been respected by the supreme governor, not to work a miracle, where the purpose can be finally accomplished by the slow progress of natural means; yet it is manifest, that in the introduction of a system totally new, so opposite to the expectations, opinions, prejudices, and habits of mankind, demanded the immediate

interposition of the Deity, through the agency of this divine messenger; and it was also necessary that he should bring his credentials with him, by the power of working miracles. The purity of his precepts could not alone be sufficient to awaken the attention, and promote the reformation, of a sinful world. They might be approved of by the reason of all; they might have been beneficial to the well disposed; but they could not convey any authoritative declaration, that the precepts inculcated, and the moral discipline of this world, have an immediate relation to a future state of existence; and that the virtuous and pious affections, so strenuously enforced, were in order to prepare moral agents for eternal happiness. Nor could the auxiliary of a perfect example, equally enforce an obedience to the precepts of virtue. Example cannot be of an extensive influence. It may appear excellent, but to imitate may be deemed optional; and it might have been applauded and admired by those who saw not their obligation to imitate. The miraculous gift, with which this preacher of righteousness was endowed, gave an infinite energy to both: they proved him to be a delegate from heaven; it was proclaimed from above, "this is my beloved Son;" and it is commanded from above, "*hear ye*

him." Which annihilates *option*, and creates a *duty*.

The Perfection of his character, was, in itself, a perpetual miracle. It was peculiar to him, without a single exception. Every other prophet of God, had many imperfections. Jesus Christ was the only being clothed with humanity, with whom the father was *always* well pleased. No other individual, of the posterity of Adam, commenced and persevered in a course of virtue and piety, without numberless aberrations. To err, in the first attempts, is the concomitant of ignorance. Things present, will arrest the whole attention of those who cannot form any conceptions of treasures in reserve. The passions will be excited before reason is awake to direct them; and without the directions of reason, they must be subjected to numberless irregularities. The unrestrained indulgencies of these, may render continued ignorance criminal, and foster the vices of indolence, inattention, and obstinacy; but dispositions the most humble, docile, and attentive, have never secured the pupil of virtue from the frailties of humanity, although, by the aid of proper discipline and correctives, they have greatly advanced his progress. The obvious exemption of our divine Saviour from the imperfections

inherent in our nature, can alone be explained by a conviction, that God was with him; that he was under the immediate and supernatural influence of his heavenly father. The native purity of his heart, suavity of his temper, superiority of his intellectual endowments, were under the fostering care of *his* Father, and *our* Father, *his* God, and *our* God, for the benefit of the universal family.

His obscure situation, before he entered upon his public ministry, precluded him from enjoying the advantages of human instruction. The most distinguished Sages of antiquity, acquired those degrees of knowledge which rendered them conspicuously eminent, in advanced years, and at the expence of much time and labour. They were obliged to travel into remote countries, in order to collect fragments of knowledge from the reputed seats of wisdom. But *he was taught of God.* He spake as never man spake, without those human aids which other sages had enjoyed; and at a very early period of life, he had acquired knowledge which astonished the venerable rulers of the synagogue.

Without the perfection of moral character he could not have enjoyed the honour of being the Saviour of the world. He could not have been the pattern of *all* righteousness. Nor

could he have been qualified for those offices in which he was destined to excel; and by which he was eminently distinguished from every other prophet of God. It was for such important purposes, and it was in consequence of this perfection of character, that he was honoured with the intimate union with God, which is placed in so striking a point of view by the beloved disciple John; who delights in recording those sayings of Jesus which have a reference to it; "The Father loveth the Son, and has given all things into his hand. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father. I am in the Father, and the Father in me. I and the Father are one," &c. &c. &c.

This is, therefore, a miracle of a peculiar description; that he who was born of a woman, who uniformly styles himself the Son of Man, should be without sin. Whatever may be the opinions of Christians, respecting the *physical* nature of Christ, however they may interpret particular passages respecting *personality, prior existence,* or *essential inferiority,* they must all agree, that in him the *fulness of the Godhead* dwelled, in a peculiar and unrivalled manner; for in his moral character he was the *brightness of his Father's glory,* and the express image of his person, ὢν απαὺγασμα τῆς δόξης, και χαρακτὴρ

τῆς ὑποςασεως αὐτȣ̃, being the effulgence of the glory, and character of the nature of him. Nor could the moral attributes of the invisible God, be more conspicuously displayed, and rendered visible to human eyes.

Another characteristic excellence, respecting the mission of this divine messenger, is, that all his miracles were works of *kindness* and *compassion.* "He went about doing good." He healed all manner of diseases; he was feet to the lame, eyes to the blind. He raised the dead to life, and restored them to their joyful relatives. He miraculously healed the wound inflicted by the zealous Peter, on one of the band appointed to seize his person. He omitted to exert his divine power to procure personal advantage or accommodations to himself, although he had not at all times where to lay his head. Nor did he solicit the aid of the Almighty for his own liberation, although legions of angels were at his command.

This striking peculiarity points out a characteristic difference between the miracles of Jesus, and the generality of those which were wrought by the prophets of God, under the Jewish

dispensation. The miracles wrought in Egypt were all of a tremendous nature. They were intended to strike terror and dismay into the unbelieving pagans, and to awe the children of Israel into an obedience to the divine commands. For the same reason was the law promulgated from mount Sinai, in the midst of terrors.

Most of the miracles of Jehovah were performed to vindicate his superiority among the surrounding idolaters; and to deter the Israelites from imitating their example. Comparatively few were wrought for the sole purposes of general benevolence. This distinguishing characteristic was reserved for the miracles of Jesus. This new dispensation was preeminently a dispensation of *Grace;* and the complexion of the miracles, by which it was introduced and established, was ordained to be in perfect unison with its object. To these works he appealed to confirm the truth of his mission. Impostors have never been renowned for going about doing good. When the prophet John sent two of his disciples from his prison, to enquire of Jesus, art thou he who should come, or do we look for another? The answer was, "Go and shew John those things which ye do, hear, and see: the blind receive their sight, and

the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them: and blessed is he whoever shall not be offended in me."

His disciples, James and John, who were distinguished for the mildness of their dispositions, observing that their master was not received with due honour by the Samaritans, through a national prejudice, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem; under the united emotions of resentment, and of zeal for his honour, they were eager to become the ministers of vengeance, and solicited for power to command fire from heaven and consume them. At this period they were not *Christians*, in the strictest sense of the term. They were simply *disciples*, *scholars* who were *learning* his doctrines, and preparing for the promulgation of them. They still retained the harsh principles of resentment, and of vindictive justice, which it was not the object of the Jewish system to subdue. Their master rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." When these and the other disciples, even the zealous Saul, were fully initiated in the principles of the Christian

religion, the disposition to persecute others was completely eradicated. They had learned that it was more becoming the Christian character, to suffer persecution even unto death, for the cause of truth and righteousness, than to make proselytes by compulsion.

As in the first introduction of Christianity miracles were necessary, thus were they also to its subsequent promulgation. After the resurrection of their Divine master, the Apostles being delegated to evangelize, or teach the doctrines of Christ's mission, his death, resurrection, forgiveness of sins, and a future judgment, they were also furnished with similar credentials. They were miraculously endowed with the gift of tongues, that they might propagate the gospel among the Gentile nations; and they were enabled to heal the sick, cure the maimed, raise the dead, and perform all those offices of benignity, which corresponded with the benignant nature of the gospel they preached. The only instances of severity were in two extraordinary cases of absolute necessity. Blindness was inflicted upon the magician, who imagined that the power of working miracles might be purchased with money; and who intended to degrade these gifts of heaven to the most sordid purposes. Ananias and Sapphira were punished

with death, because they had conspired together to impose upon the primitive Christians, and acquire a character for liberality, by a fraudulent act. The public and aweful punishment of their guilt, manifested the wrath of heaven against deceit, which must have made a salutary impression upon the early converts, and preserved their holy religion from the contempt of intelligent heathens.

It has been observed, in our disquisition on the Jewish economy, that no superflous miracle was ever performed; that the divine being, in every instance, respected that constitution of things which we term the *laws of nature*, to the utmost extent of their efficacy. This circumstance, we allege, demonstrates the credibility of those upon record; distinguishing real miracles from the pretensions of impostors, whose vanity always betrays them into a frivolous and unnecessary display of their assumed powers. Similar observations are applicable to the new dispensation of God. The miracles necessary for the introduction and promulgation of Christianity, were confined to this object; nor did they extend farther than was requisite for its accomplishment.

We have already seen that no one miracle was wrought by Christ, for his own personal

advantage, in the most trying situations. Nor did he ever *waste*, if we may thus express it, his supernatural powers. In the resurrection of Lazarus, with what a dignified propriety did he direct others, to take away the stone from the sepulchre, confining his energies to what others could not perform: "crying with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth; and he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; Jesus saith unto them, loose him and let him go." In the miraculous deliverance of Peter from the prison, we discover the same characteristics. To the angel of the Lord is ascribed, every action absolutely necessary for his escape from the prison; and after he had directed his way, forthwith the angel departed from him.

After Christ and his apostles had proved the truth of their divine mission, by competent miracles, they submitted all other facts, and the doctrines to be received, to the reason and understandings of their audience. In every instance was great attention paid to the influence of natural causes; and to the genuine workings of the human mind. When our Saviour had proved that he was the prophet foretold, by the perfection of his precepts, the purity of his morals, and miracles of beneficence; which made the most favourable impressions upon the

minds of his attendants, he chose from among these, twelve disciples; not distinguished by learning or sagacity, but by the goodness of their hearts, and docility to learn. The world might thus be convinced, that his excellent doctrines could not be ascribed to human wisdom. He gained upon their affections by the superior excellence of his character, and the mild benignity of his temper; and his affection for them was manifestly founded upon the uprightness and docility of their minds. They were slowly and cautiously instructed in the spiritual nature of his mission. They could not boast of sudden conversions and miraculous illuminations. Their Jewish prejudices, and erroneous expectations were not insulted, they were gradually removed. The disciples were taught just as they were able to bear instruction; and they became witnesses to many surprising and unexpected events, before they were qualified for the important office of apostolic missionaries.

It was the conversion of Saul alone which bore the signature of a miracle. This was instantaneous, because the infant church was in the most imminent danger. It was to prevent the carnage which his mad zeal would have occasioned: "for he was breathing out

threatenings and slaughter, against the disciples of the Lord, and going to Damascus to search the Synagogues, that if he found any of this way he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." His conversion was of the utmost moment to the very cause he was attempting to destroy. His high repute for strictness in the Jewish religion, for his philosophical education, learning, and eloquence, rendered him an acquisition of infinite importance to the rising cause. The manner of his conversion impressed his grateful heart with the deepest humility, and augmented his zeal for that religion he had been persecuting. "I am, says he, the least of the apostles, I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church; but by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." He was converted, that his superior powers of intellect might have their full employment upon their proper objects. They were thus miraculously directed into the service of Christianity. By them he was singularly qualified to become the apostle of the Gentiles. By a philosophical education he was prepared to argue with the heathen philosophers, upon their own principles. Of this we have

triking instances in his dispute with the Athenians; and in his vindicating the possibility of a resurrection, according to the analogy of nature.

But this "great grace, that was with him," did not preclude the use of natural means. He was referred to an eminent disciple at Damascus, for particular instructions. Ananias was encouraged to visit the dangerous persecutor, by a vision from heaven; which, by corresponding with the directions miraculously given to the new convert, completely removed the anxious suspicions of Ananias, and confirmed the faith of both. At this period terminated the immediate inspiration relative to this event. For Saul remained certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus, obviously to be instructed in the grand principles of Christianity; and straightway he preached Christ in the Synagogues, that "he is the Son of God, to the amazement of all men."

One striking trait in the history of human nature, is the history of its deep and inveterate prejudices. Notions implanted at an early period, grow up, as it were, a part of ourselves; reason may be silenced, long before it will be convinced. Some evasion or other is invented, in order to protect the primitive principles. The Jewish

nation having been, during a course of ages, treated as the peculiar favourites of heaven, they universally claimed a proscriptive right to this exclusive privilege. It would have been in vain to assert, that an impartial God cannot, in reality, be an arbitrary respecter of persons; and that to him who loveth righteousness, the man in every nation that worketh righteousness, shall be accepted. The history of their own nation would have been adduced to confute the principle. Even the favoured disciples of that Jesus, who declared that he came to give light to the whole world, could not have imagined that this light should shine with equal lustre among the Gentiles. Here again was a miracle necessary. The apostle Peter was instructed, by an emblematical vision, that the distinction which had continued during so many ages, was no longer to exist; and he was ordered to give instruction to the devout heathen, Cornelius. Cornelius was directed, by a correspondent vision, to "send to Joppa, and call for one, Simon, surnamed Peter." The coincidence in this case, also, confirmed the faith of each. Peter being thus authorised to preach to the Gentiles, he tells Cornelius and his assembled household, how God had anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; "who

went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him;" and he said, "we are witnessess of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they slew, and hanged on a tree; him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly." These were the facts he preached; he left them to operate, and they operated to the conviction and conversion of these heathens, from the paganism of their fathers.

Many other instances might be adduced to show, that, under circumstances in which natural means could not be efficient, recourse was had to those which were supernatural, for the introduction and promulgation of Christianity; while the course of truth, respecting subordidate parts, was committed to the influence of natural causes. Christianity being received, and its essential doctrines well understood, by the early Pagan and Jewish converts, they were left to the exercise of their own understandings, for decisions upon various intricate questions which occasionally presented themselves.

After a number of the Gentiles had embraced the Christian faith, we read, that some of the Jewish converts not only retained the ancient ordinance of circumcision, but their prejudices induced them to impose it also upon the Gentiles.

But this point was finally settled by the deliberate exercise of their own understandings, without any miraculous interposition; although the harmony of the Church seemed to depend upon their decisions. The apostles and elders being assembled to deliberate upon the subject, they agreed that it was not proper to lay upon the Gentile converts, any other injunctions than those which were requisite to preserve them from idolatry, and the immoral practices which heathenism did not prohibit. "They were to abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication."

Nor are we authorized to assert, that the primitive apostles were, in every respect, under the infallible direction of God, like their great master. He was the fountain, and of his fulness they received those portions of grace, which the peculiarities of their mission demanded. They were all inspired to preach, and they preached with one voice, the *fundamental doctrines*, that Christ was the Messiah, the sent of God, empowered to proclaim peace and reconciliation to penitent believers; that he was unjustly crucified; that he arose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and that he shall come again to judge the world in righteousness.

But they were not uniformly preserved from the errors and failings incident to humanity. Paul and Barnabas, those fellow workers in the promulgation of Gospel truths, quarrelled and parted about a circumstance which appears to us extremely trivial. Again, Saul accused Peter of duplicity in his conduct, upon a subject where it might have been the least expected. That very Peter, who had the honour of introducing Christianity among the heathens, by an express revelation, and associated with them at one period, not only withdrew from them, but compelled them to conform to some of the Jewish customs. "When Peter was come to Antioch," as St. Paul writes to the Galatians, "I withstood him to the face, because he was to blame; for before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision; and the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch, that Barnabas was also carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, if thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the

Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"*

Peter acknowledges, that in the epistles of his colleague Paul, are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do other Scriptures, unto their own destruction. The difficulty must be ascribed to his abstruse mode of reasoning concerning points of doctrine, the opinions he entertained, and the basis of these opinions. Whatever deserves the character of an immediate revelation from heaven, must be explicit, and not be so obscurely expressed, that a brother apostle, who was also a divinely appointed missionary, should acknowledge that his sentiments were hard to be understood. These obscurities, in some measure, continue to the present hour. Most of our theological controversies are occasioned by them; and, what is most to be lamented, those passages which are the least understood are, in the warmth of disputation, considered as the most important!

St. Paul manifests his integrity, and strengthens our confidence respecting the truths he had professedly received by inspiration, when he acknowledges that he was not at all times inspired.

* Gal. ii. 12—14.

In the advice given to the Corinthians, concerning the propriety or impropriety of marriages, at a time in which they were so much exposed to persecutions, he pretended not to the authority of an immediate revelation; but he speaks according to his judgment, and yet "I think," says he, "that I have the spirit of the Lord." At other times, he confesses, that the counsel given is entirely from himself.

This faithful narrative of failings, in such eminent characters, and the cautious expressions used, confirm our faith in the gospel history, more than the highest pretensions to infallibility. By the conscientious and ingenuous care taken not to mislead by his authority, the Apostle *establishes* his authority. These facts point out the distinction which exists between the infallibility belonging to the source of all wisdom; the unerring inspirations imparted to the great Prophet, in whom the fulness of the Godhead is said to dwell; and the more circumscribed powers communicated to subordinate agents and fallible men; who, like the ancient prophets under the Jewish dispensation, were favoured with those degrees of illumination, which were adapted to the peculiar designs of their mission; and to such were they obviously confined.

That the divine wisdom and benevolence have proportioned the degrees of evidence to the importance of the doctrines revealed, is conspicuous in every part of revelation; but in no instance doth this truth appear more obvious, than in the testimonies surrounding that fundamental doctrine, the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. He was appointed to be the first fruits of them that sleep. "If Christ be not risen," says the Apostle, "there is no resurrection of the dead; ye are yet in your sins." An event so preternatural, so opposite to every appearance, so contradictory to the experience of men, demands powerful evidence.

This it enjoys, for we may safely assert, that no one event upon record is guarded with more, we may say with *equal*, security against the attacks of incredulity. The divine precaution foresaw every possible objection, and provided an answer. That Jesus of Nazareth was suspended on the cross, no one denies who believes in his existence; that he *died* on the cross, is evident from the nature of the wound inflicted on the side. He was publicly entombed. The amazement and despondency of his followers, at such an event, so contrary to their expectations, and which destroyed all their hopes, would not inspire them with a disposition

fraudulently to convey away the body of one who had disappointed them, and whom they must have suspected to have been an enthusiast or an impostor. The extraordinary precaution taken by the enemies of Christ to secure the sepulchre, and prevent the possibility of fraud, would have rendered any attempts of his former disciples, had they been so disposed, acts of madness as well as of absurdity. The miserable defence of the guards confutes itself. Its being received as an apology, instead of their being severely punished for their universal and ill-timed drowsiness; their being bribed to propagate the tale which convicted them of a breach of duty; and the promise made by the Elders, that they should be secured from the resentment of the Roman governor, sufficiently proved the chagrin and amazement of the Elders, respecting this marvellous event. The frequent intercourse of our Saviour with his disciples and followers, after the resurrection, in order completely to remove their incredulity, and direct their future conduct; the publicity of his ascension to heaven; these closing events, being in perfect conformity with the objects of his mission, and with his own predictions concerning the manner of his death, and certainty of his resurrection, form such an united mass of evidence, that "him who was

by wicked hands crucified and slain, God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it;" these are such numerous, distinct, united, unequivocal vouchers of the important fact, that nothing remains for incredulity, but boldly to deny the power of the Almighty to perform so great a miracle, and declare that it is absolutely impossible for God to raise the dead!

CONCLUSION.

We have now finished our analytical enquiries. If we have been circuitous, it was in order to follow the clues which might best conduct us through many labyrinths. We have been prolix, in order to be perspicuous; and we have attempted to define or explain every important word which presented itself, in order to escape that confusion of ideas which is the natural result of confusion in language. In our *ethical disquisitions*, we have not entered into those speculative subjects which generally attract the attention of moral philosophers; but we have endeavoured to trace the *moral history of the human mind*, in its powers, pursuits, motives of action, &c. The obvious and important result of our enquiries is, that no pursuits can be so interesting as the moral and intellectual improvement of the human mind; and no motives so powerful as those which proceed from the principles of true religion. It has been shewn

that, if we consider religion in its general and most comprehensive sense, or as it respects the sentiments of mankind, concerning the existence, demands, and powers, of superior Beings, it is a very potent principle of action; whatever may be the opinions concerning the specific duties imposed. This principle is universally acknowledged to possess a momentum, far exceeding every consideration of a sublunary influence. Hence it is, that erroneous opinions in religion have been productive of so many evils. We have also proved, that the conceptions of religion most favourable to virtue, most conducive to human happiness, which destroy the opposition naturally subsisting between self-interest and the social duties, are founded on a solid basis; and they are not to be confounded with those wild and extravagant notions which pervaded the pagan world. They arise from principles perfectly consonant with the dictates of the purest reason; although reason was not able, at a period of universal blindness and degeneracy, to perceive and adopt them.

We have also attempted to prove, that the leading object of the Jewish Dispensation, was to protect the dictates of pure Morality, and the principles of pure Religion, from being

totally lost to mankind, through the prevalence of paganism; and gradually to disseminate a knowledge of them among the Gentiles. These appeared to us to be the grand characteristics of that dispensation; and to furnish the most satisfactory proofs that it was of a divine origin; although it was so limited in its operations and influence. In the Christian Dispensation we behold the moral duties, personal and social, still more accurately defined, and enforced by far superior motives. Worldly prosperity alone was promised to the Jews as the reward of their obedience, whereas to the true Christian is opened the joyful prospect of IMMORTALITY; the possession of an eternal inheritance in the presence of their reconciled father! They are "become the heirs of God, and joint heirs with our Lord Jesus Christ!" Let the utmost stretch of the most vigorous imagination, attempt to exceed this so great a recompense of reward!

Such are the primary characteristic excellences of our holy religion. They are acknowledged by all those who profess to be Christians; and they will be enjoyed by every true believer. They are not articles of Speculation, in which one Christian may think differently from another; they are not the doctrines of Inference, but of

immediate Revelation; nor can they be rejected, without the rejection of Christianity itself.

Whatever sentiments we may form concerning the precise nature of the mediatorial office; concerning the physical nature of Christ; concerning the nature, object, and duration of future punishments; notwithstanding the importance of these subjects, they are still the opinions of *inference;* and our opinions may be very different, without enfeebling those clearer principles, those grand doctrines of revelation; the divine mission of Jesus; that he is the Messiah — that his doctrines and character were perfect;—that his death was unjust and ignominious;—that the grave had no dominion over him;—that he was appointed to be the Prince and the Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins;—and that because he lives, we shall live also. These doctrines contain the strongest, most influential motives to virtue and piety. These doctrines remain untouched; nor can their moral influence be diminished, by our particular sentiments concerning the precise manner in which the death of our divine leader was rendered efficient to the pardon of our sins; the precise nature of the punishment from which he may have liberated every true

believer; or the extent of the punishment which still awaits the impenitent.

We have stated our opinions upon these controverted points, with freedom, precision, and, we think, with force. Our statements appear to us to be most scriptural, and perfectly rational. They not only coincide with the whole current of scriptural language, but they seem to require its peculiar phraseology to render them explicit.* They are free from those interpretations, on the one hand, which appear defective or evasive; and they most happily escape those dreadful systems, against which the reason of men, and the feelings of men, instantly take the alarm. We have amply given our reasons for entertaining such sentiments, and they are submitted to the scrutiny of our readers.

It cannot be expected that these, or other parts of so extensive a work, which peculiarly demands an accumulation of admitted facts, accurate arrangements, and legitimate inferences, should be free from various errors. But a detection of such occasional errors will not be a confutation of our principles. This can alone be accomplished by instituting analytical enquiries also, pursuing them with similar dili-

* See Note R.

gence, similar attempts at precision, with superior perspicuity, and with a contrary result.

As an apology for the great extent of this work, the author begs leave to remark, that in its *unity*, it is an aggregate of distinct treatises, upon subjects which are not unfrequently investigated by the philosopher, moralist, and divine, in a separate and insolated manner. This distinct and insolated contemplation of each subject, has often occupied the mind so intensely, that their intimate relation to each other has remained unnoticed; and the influence of the whole has been greatly enfeebled, if not totally forgotten. It has, therefore, been our desire to pay such an attention to each branch, as should enable us to form clear conceptions of its leading constituent principles, while we pursued our enquiries in such a manner as might point out the connection of each with a *whole, an important whole;* upon which the happiness of all the rational creatures of God immediately depends.

In our analytical pursuits, it was not in our power to be concise. But we are not under the necessity of being prolix, in our application of the principles advanced, to their various moral and

practical uses. It has been our object to direct the reader's attention to those principles upon which right practice is founded; to trace the harmonious connection which subsists between well-regulated passions and affections, moral conduct, rational religion, and human happiness. The application of these to the various duties of life, must be left to the Moralist and Divine. As the whole tenour of these disquisitions evinces the folly and madness of vice and irreligion; the wisdom of virtue and piety; their being essential to human welfare in the present world, and to eternal felicity in a future state, it would be superflous to expatiate upon these subjects, at present. Nor shall we expatiate upon the numerous and animating motives to the practice of virtue and religion, which must present themselves, to every attentive mind, in the course of its ethical and theological enquiries.

We shall, therefore, conclude the whole, with a few very cursory observations.

I. We would invite Unbelievers of every class, seriously to attend to the representations which have been given, in this and the preceding volume, of those dispensations which Christians pronounce to be divine. We would ask, do they perceive any thing irrational in their object, or in the pursuit of their object? Any thing

unworthy of a God possessing every perfection? Any thing inimical to the best interests of the human race?

To the embarrassed Atheist it will not be necessary to say much, at the conclusion of a work, every page of which contains principles calculated to relieve him from his embarrassments; and to prove to him that the confusion does not exist in the ways of Providence, but in his own conceptions concerning them. The concatenation which exists through the whole economy of Providence and of grace, manifests the progressive agency of an intelligent, wise, powerful, beneficent, cause, in the gradual promotion of human felicity, according to that rank in which the human race is placed, in the vast universe of God. If the Atheist believes not in a God, it must be because he knows not God. If he dares to ridicule the Believer, it is because he is deluded by some phantom in his own imagination. All his objections plainly indicate that he has not made a proper use of his discriminating powers. He has confounded the God of the Jews and of the Christians, with the Gods of the Heathens; and he concludes, that the absurd notions of superstitious ignorance, are a demonstration that a rational religion cannot possibly exist! Let him reflect how much is lost by his abnegation of such a God. LIFE!

IMMORTALITY !! The eternal exercise of those intellectual powers, by which he professes to be directed, upon the noblest and most important objects ! Whereas, according to his system, their sole use is to place man at the head of the brute creation, at the head of perishable beings; and to render him discontented, by discovering to him that he has superior powers without their proper object, and superior desires which never can be gratified !

The sincere and conscientious *Deist* cannot be far from the kingdom of Heaven. He who believes in the existence and moral perfections of a Deity; who acknowledges him in his relative character, and admits that he wills the happiness of his intelligent offspring, can have no reasonable objection to a dispensation, which displays such a character, and proves that he is acting correspondently, in the promotion of the best interests of his family. The objections of a rational and virtuous Deist, cannot be against the pure, primitive principles of our religion; they can only be opposed to the doctrines of fallible men: some of which must be spurious, and others of an inferior importance. They are all of a more speculative nature. They are

doctrines of *inference*, the result of *ratiocination*; and if the reasonings upon which they are founded, should not appear to be conclusive, to the diligent enquirer after truth, they may be rejected without relinquishing the name, or the hopes of a Christian.

The view which we have given of Christianity, and which, we think, is supported by the strongest evidences from the Scriptures, will, we believe, sufficiently obviate the most formidable of his objections. If he admit our principles, he will not reject the gospel of Christ, because it reveals the eternal misery of myriads of the creatures of God, whom it cannot save. Nor will he censure the plan of God for not introducing Christianity into the world, at an earlier period, when he believes that all men will ultimately be benefited by it; but each in his own order. Nor will he dispute the power or the wisdom of God, in the occasional exertion of a preternatural power, in cases where the natural means would have been inadequate. The Atheist must disbelieve in miracles, because, according to his principles, there is no one to perform them; but it is presumptuous in a Theist, who acknowledges the existence of a Being, *capable* of working miracles, to deny the *possibility* or *propriety* of introducing a new

order of things into the moral world, by furnishing his servants with the requisite credentials.

There is one consideration which deserves peculiar attention, from the most moral Unbeliever. By rejecting the divine mission of Jesus, he decidedly renounces a *title* to its blessings. He voluntarily places himself in the same situation with the ancient Pagans. Even his superior virtues are sullied by injustice and ingratitude. He has acquired his more exalted sentiments in the school of Jesus; but he denies that he was taught of God, through the medium of Jesus. Nor can his sublimest virtues inspire him with the hopes of the joyful immortality, which is brought to life by the gospel; for life and immortality are *promised* to the Believer alone. The conditions are, "He that *believes* shall be saved." "He that believeth not is condemned, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God." The complaint is, "Ye will not come unto me, that Ye may have life;" and it is declared "if Ye believe not that I am he, Ye shall die in your sins."

The conscientious Deist, will not be apprehensive that he shall be condemned, by a God of equity, to everlasting misery, for rejecting what he cannot believe to be the truth, but he has just

reason to be apprehensive that he shall not be placed in the same happy state as the faithful disciples of the Son of God. The plan of God may demand such arrangements, in a future world, as may inspire him with deep regret at his incredulity. At all events, he can have no claim upon the *covenanted mercies of God.* This phrase has been so familiarly used, not to say abused, by one class of Christians, that it is sunk into disrepute with others; but it has a very important signification. The *mercies of God endure for ever;* but the displays of them, or their immediate application to the happiness of his responsible creatures, are always *conditional.* They must, therefore, be deferred until stipulated conditions shall be complied with. Those who have had the gospel of Christ preached unto them, and have treated it as a fable, must remain in a gloomy uncertainty, to speak in the gentlest terms, concerning their future destination, *for they cannot be included in this covenant of Grace.* In our Gospel is the following admonition: "He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy; of how much sorer punishment suppose Ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy

thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?"

Nothing but a perfect consciousness of the sincerity with which enquiries into the truth of Christianity have been made; or an absolute certainty that it is a delusion, can render the mind of an unbeliever composed, under a warning of so alarming a nature.

Of the *Jewish People* it may be asked, whether the Saviour whom they expect can exceed, in suavity of manners, in dignity of character, in universal philanthropy and benevolence, the Messiah of the Christians? Or whether they suppose, that the Object of their desires will so closely resemble the description given by their prophet, Isaiah, of the great Emanual? "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief:—He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," &c. &c.*

* Isaiah liii. 3.

Will the earthly conqueror, whom the Jews expect, submit to a state and a treatment like this? Under such a conqueror, and amidst the tumults of war, and the scenes of tyranny, oppression, hatred, and animosities they occasion, can they expect that the transcendant blessings of peace and universal prosperity shall be enjoyed? so that "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling, together; and a little child shall lead them?" Is there any conquest equal to the conquest over sin and misery? or can any one effect this but the Captain of our salvation; in whom there was no sin, neither guile found in his mouth; against whom their ancestors, his very murderers, sought in vain for a subject of just crimination? Can any other preacher of righteousness be looked for, whose precepts shall be more pure, whose example shall be more perfect, whose motives to obedience shall be more animating? Can they promise that their future Saviour shall more effectually save all mankind from their sins, promote universal holiness, so that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea? Or is it rational to suppose, that the grand promise to their father Abraham, that "in

his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," can be accomplished by any means more effectual than by the universal acceptance of the religion of Jesus, in its primitive purity and simplicity? Can better days be expected, than those which the religion of Jesus is calculated to introduce, for the accomplishment of the following promise? "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the days that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people; and they shall teach no more, every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more?"*

II. We would ask those Christians, who manifest such a fond predilection for controver-

* Jerem. xxxi. 31.

sial subjects, whether they be not spending too much of their precious time, and misapplying the hour which should be devoted to the worship of the universal father, and training up his rational offspring to glory, honour, and immortality, by perpetual discussions upon speculative points, and subjects of doubtful disputation? Are there not, in the whole dispensation of grace, subjects infinitely more instructive, and encouraging, wherewith one may edify another? The Hebrews are exhorted not perpetually to dwell upon topics, which the Apostle considered the most fundamental points of Christianity, but *to go on to perfection;* how reprehensible, therefore, would he think the employment of those, who are assiduously and presumptuously adding to the doctrines which he has stated, speculations of inferior importance, which, if true, are of a *secondary* consideration alone; and which become *injurious*, when they occupy the whole attention of the preacher and his audience; rendering it impracticable for them to give all diligence to add to their "faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."

It is an historical fact, that all the doctrines

which were preached by the Apostles, when they were sent forth, endowed with miraculous powers, to *preach the* GOSPEL, were those, which we have described as *primitive doctrines*, believed by Christians of every denomination:—It is also a fact, that the expressions, upon which the disputed doctrines of inference are founded, were not only incidentally used, in their epistolary correspondence, but occasionally urged, as containing the sublimest motives to the practice of every religious and moral duty:—It is, moreover, a melancholy fact, that the obscurities which, in the present day, surround these passages, have given them a decided preference to more obvious, and more important principles! They have been forcibly detached from the connections, which rendered them peculiarly applicable; have been made the subjects of disputation; have been converted into *fundamental articles of faith:* and that moral preaching, which they were adduced to enforce, has been stigmatized as a heathenish deviation from Christianity! Teachers of morality have been censured as "Apes of Epictetus," instead of being honoured as the followers of him who was pre-eminently *the Preacher of morals!*

The natural influence of the *primitive* doctrines of Christianity, is to promote harmony and bro-

therly love. They cherish the sentiment that we are one large family, gratefully surrounding the throne of God, in the character of a reconciled Parent.—We all agree that Christ died, and rose again, and hath provided a heavenly inheritance for his faithful followers.—But his faithful followers *obey* his commands; and his commands are *to love one another*. We all agree, that he came to proclaim pardon and remission of sin to the penitent; and we all know that much of our criminality consists in the hatreds, discords, and oppressions, so prevalent among the children of God. But, such is the perverseness of men, that this very embassy of mercy has *augmented* our animosities! Disgraceful *contests* have arisen concerning the *person* of the *embassador of peace*, or the precise *share* he may have in the proposals of reconciliation! and thus do the professed supplicants for grace, augment the very crimes which he came to pardon!

It is these speculative tenets and doctrines of inference *alone*, which have *stained all the pages of Church history with blood!* Nor has the zeal of contending parties been excited, in proportion to the intrinsic importance of the question agitated. The merest trifles appear important to agitated minds; and by such are rendered the occasions of infinite mischief. Such minds mis-

take *opinions* for *faith*, and the vehemence with which they are propagated, for *zeal* for gospel truths. The more frivolous the subject, the more acrimonious the contest! Debates among venerable Patriarchs and Pontiffs, about the precise day on which the celebration of the passover should commence; the degrees of heresy that will invalidate the ordinance of baptism, and render it inefficient to wash away sins; the dispute whether the body of Christ was subjected to corruption, and whether he had two distinct wills, in consequence of the union of his two natures, &c. &c. have desolated nations, and convulsed empires!

The disposition to divert their attention, from the things which alone are able to make a man wise unto salvation, to subjects of controversy and doubtful disputation, soon discovered itself in the primitive churches; and it is severely reprehended by the Apostles. Such disputes St. Paul distinguishes from the genuine Gospel which had been preached to them, by denominating them "the words of men's wisdom;" ascribing them to the spirit of the world, in distinction from the things which the Holy Ghost teacheth; and he considers this disposition as characteristic of the *carnal mind*. "For whereas there is among you envying and strife, and divi-

sions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?"* But, in the severity of his reproofs, he still preserves that spirit of charity which is so ornamental to the true Christian, and which is so soon extinguished in the carnal mind. He declares, "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: yet he himself shall be saved: yet so as by fire."

Whatever may be the precise signification of this passage, it contains a menace, which demands the attention of every builder of systems; and, before he engages in the office, he should certainly be cautious not to mistake wood, hay, and stubble, for gold, silver, and precious stones.

III. Notwithstanding we have endeavoured

* 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

to prove, that the primitive doctrines preached by the Apostles, when they were converting Jews and Pagans, are the only essential doctrines of Christianity; we have admitted, that there are other principles of no small importance, having a tendency to animate our hopes, excite worthy affections, augment our diligence; and, had we not been convinced that the principles advanced in this disquisition, and which we have endeavoured to elucidate and establish, are peculiarly calculated to produce such effects, we should have spared ourselves the trouble of writing it. We know that to elicit truths by deduction is an hazardous attempt. It is treading upon dangerous ground; we have endeavoured to tread cautiously, and we must leave it to others to judge, whether we have been treading securely. We should deeply lament the possibility of being confuted in the leading articles advanced, as they appear to us most honourable to God, most honourable to the Saviour, and most conducive to universal happiness. But, although we shall suppose that partial errors will be detected, we cannot be apprehensive of a complete confutation. We have strictly conformed to the rules that were proposed upon our entrance upon the subject; giving the preference to those sentiments which

are the most consonant with the divine character; following the general tenour of divine revelation, and not resting our opinions upon detached passages; that inexhaustible source of error! We have also endeavoured to distinguish the plain, current, intelligible, language of the Scriptures, from metaphorical expressions, occasionally used; and to steer through the infinite diversity of opinions that crowd around primitive Christianity, by selecting those sentiments which are most rational in themselves, most conformable to the language of Scripture, and to the obvious purposes of revelation.

We have the inexpressible satisfaction to find, that the doctrine so extensively received, under the title of *eternal damnation*, is totally unfounded; totally unknown in the Scriptures; that there is not a single passage which will support the horrid idea. Unless we be permitted to form our hypothesis first, and have recourse afterwards to the Scriptures, and compel language to speak our sentiments, we shall not find a trace of that doctrine in the Old Testament. How, then, could it have been expected, in a dispensation of *Grace*, which proclaims "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men?"

Immediately connected with this doctrine,

and dependent upon it, are various other principles, against which the reason of man revolts, and which have been the occasions of infidelity, among those who have ventured to think differently from popular creeds, without being able to discriminate between the genuine principles of Christianity, and the additions of men. Such as the hereditary corruption of human nature; and its being rendered liable to the wrath of God, and eternal misery in the world to come, upon account of Adam's transgression; the infinite malignity of sin, because it is committed by finite beings against an infinite being, although the aggressor be ignorant, feeble, and finite; the infinite personal justice of God, demanding a plenary satisfaction for the sins of the elect, &c. &c. These are principles which give to a dispensation of grace an aspect of terror, unknown to the ancient Jews. They are hypothetic notions invented;—for what?—in order to vindicate the ways of God to man, *in the eternal misery of a large majority of his offspring!* Such unsatisfactory and unworthy positions must fall into oblivion, if the principle we advance be consonant with the Scriptures: If the condemnation denounced against sin be admitted to consist in the judicial punishment of death, or in the loss of that vitality which has been abused,

This is a sentence which every one will confess to be perfectly just; and the repeal of the sentence every one must admit to be an act of grace. How consoling is it to be assured, that he who does not punish willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nought, will not always chide, nor retain his anger for ever; and when chastisements shall have answered the purposes of reformation, that he will finally be reconciled to all, with whom he stands in the relative character of a Parent! Sentiments like these inspire a filial confidence, without encouraging presumption; alarm the wicked, without the horrors of despair, murmurs of discontent, or suspicions of injustice and cruelty. They enable us also to form consistent ideas of the precise object of Christ's death; the extent of its efficacy; the obligations we owe to him; and these are calculated to call forth our love, admiration, and dispositions to obey his precepts, infinitely more than perpetual contests about his *essence;* for the study of essences can produce no other sensations than the embarrassments and astonishments of ignorance!

All the sentiments which we consider as constituting the characteristic excellencies of Christianity, have a direct tendency to inspire that ardent love to the Universal Parent, which is so

strongly enjoined upon us, as an incumbent duty. They are perfectly consonant with the important truth that GOD IS LOVE, ESSENTIAL BENIGNITY! Reason, scripture, duty, are now in perfect unison. The affections flow in a steady pleasing course, without being checked or diverted by systematic doubts. We are consoled under all the evils of life, by the assurance that they are the corrections of a wise and good parent; and that the light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Such principles confute the subterfuges of the wicked, and destroy every false hope, by demonstrating the necessity of holiness, as a preparation for happiness; however severe the means by which this object is to be obtained.

Nor do they leave in abject despair those miserable beings who die in their sins. They still may hope that they shall not be *eternally* forsaken by the God who made them; and although they expect the impending chastisements with trembling hearts; yet they possess this consolation, that, however severe or prolonged, they are still the *chastisements* of a wise and benignant Parent!

In a word, such sentiments, and as it appears to us, such sentiments *alone*, perfectly accord

with the *parental character* which the Creator of the universe has assumed; and of which we have such encouraging displays in the gospel of Christ. His severest displeasure is still the anger of a *Parent*, proceeding from *affection* alone; his severest chastisements are to produce reformation. He will ultimately rejoice in the happiness of his creatures; *for the prosperity of his children constitutes the happiness of a father!* No wise and good parent, among the children of men, will harbour an implacable, relentless, disposition, towards the most perverse of his family. Every man who deserves the character of a Father, would move heaven, earth, and hell, were it possible, to save his offspring from the transient miseries of this transient life; and will not the Universal Father, who is Lord of heaven, earth, and hell, exert his almighty arm, to save his beloved offspring, for whom Christ died, *from everlasting misery?* No human system can shorten that arm, or render it impotent to save!

By keeping inviolate the distinction so observable in the Gospel, between the primary doctrines, which every Christian believes, and those doctrines of inference, concerning which there is such a diversity of opinions, we shall be best enabled to cherish that brotherly love, which becomes children of the same family, travellers

in the same road, and candidates for the same blessings; and which is so strongly enjoined upon us by the Saviour of mankind. In this manner might we maintain the unity of faith in the bonds of peace; rendering the topics concerning which we differ, the subjects of interesting and friendly enquiry, instead of rancorous debate; teaching us to practise the discipline of that charity "which suffereth long and is kind; envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

IV. As the great Creator has not placed the human race in a state of permanent perfection and happiness, but has furnished them with the powers of progressive improvement, and placed them in situations adapted to the gradual developement and exercise of these powers, it is very obvious that, although Death is inflicted as a punishment, and is universally dreaded as an evil of the greatest magnitude, yet it is an essential part of the divine plan, and will ultimately manifest itself to be a most important blessing. Immortal existence to sinful and imperfect creatures, would increase and perpetuate human wretchedness. We daily experience, to what an extent Individuals may abuse their power, during the term of a short life, and diffuse calamities over the globe, for a long series of years; what,

then, would not be suffered, had they been immortal? Nor can the perfect felicity of the Righteous be secured to them, by the most exalted love and practice of virtue, while they are surrounded and annoyed by the vicious and depraved. How wise, therefore, is that constitution of things, by which, in due time, a total separation will be made! By the operation of which, the Righteous shall be removed into those regions where the wicked cease from troubling! Where every inhabitant, notwithstanding the gradations in moral excellence, shall possess the same spirit of piety towards God, and of love towards each other. By this happy constitution of things, shall the Virtuous and the Good of different ages, and different nations, be collected into one harmonious assembly. They shall form a glorious colony, in the kingdom of the Messiah: In a kingdom of righteousness; where "great multitudes, which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues, shall unite in ascribing blessings, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, unto our God for ever and ever!"

V. In our treatise, introductory to these disquisitions, we particularly analyzed those passions

and affections, both of a personal and a social nature, the proper indulgence of which constitutes well-being or happiness. They were then considered in the light of *powers* seated in man; creating a *possibility* in his nature, to enjoy felicity, notwithstanding he is, in the present state of things, surrounded with incessant checks and impediments. In this our disquisition on the characteristic excellencies of Christianity, we have been contemplating that state where these possibilities will be *realized;* that future inheritance; that kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness! We shall now take the liberty of transcribing a passage, which was then represented as containing a summary of those affections, the exercise of which constitutes the summit of human felicity, and, as it were, transplant it into those regions, where alone such an exercise can exist.

It is the following;

" Were the imagination commanded to paint the highest felicity to be enjoyed by created Beings, it would surely point out the union of the following emotions and affections: Ardent *Love* for an object worthy of our love; chastened with high *Veneration: Astonishment*, inspired by the contemplation of the number and extent of its excellencies, and at the unremitted

exertion of these excellencies in the diffusion of good :—*Admiration* at the wise means adapted to the accomplishment of the interesting purpose :—*Joy* and *Gratitude* for benefits already received :—lively *Hope* of good incalculable, in reserve for ourselves, conjointly with others whose welfare we ardently desire; accompanied with a *consciousness* that we have contributed a something to the general mass of felicity, according to our ability! These are ingredients to constitute the perfection of bliss! Love, Joy, Gratitude, Surprise, Admiration, Complacency, Hope, and Benevolence unbounded, may thus occupy the mind in a transporting variety, or by exerting their united powers at the same instant, occasion inconceivable raptures !!!"

The expectations of such bliss are implanted and encouraged by CHRISTIANITY; AND BY CHRISTIANITY ALONE!!

THE END.

NOTES

TO THE

PRECEDING VOLUME.

N. B. The reference to NOTE I, *has been inadvertently omitted in the text. It should have been placed in page 320, after "for ever and ever."*

NOTE A.

After, "my God, and your God," page 32.

OUR limits oblige us to treat this interesting subject in a much more cursory manner than its importance deserves; but in order to supply the deficiency, we beg leave to refer the reader to *Thoughts on the novelty, the excellence, and the evidence, of the Christian Religion.* By J. Simpson, Bath. 1798.

This learned and accurate Biblical critic observes, that "the whole doctrine of true religion, and the whole system of moral duty, respecting God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves, is inculcated in the gospel, as founded upon one plain simple fact, easily comprehensible by those of the lowest capacity, and abundantly evident to enlightened reason; namely, their God is our *father* and the *father* of all *mankind.*" He adds, "so little was the idea of God, as a *parent*, inculcated under the Mosaic dispensation, that throughout all the books of the Old Testament, I have found only twenty-five instances in which he is spoken of as a *father*, even to the children of Israel, and only twenty-eight others, in which they are styled his children. Some of these instances express these relations between God and single persons only, but none of them extend it further than to the

Jews. Nor do I know of any text in the Old Testament, in which God is called the *father* of mankind in general. —And when Jesus called Jehovah his *father*, the Jews thought it blasphemy, and were going to take up stones to stone him to death; which is a full proof, not only that they were unaccustomed to contemplate Jehovah as standing in relation to them, but also that they considered it as a daring presumption in any one to do it."

Our author proceeds to quote more passages, in proof of his assertions, than it will be necessary for us to transcribe. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to the remark, that "in the affectionate farewell discourse of our Saviour to his disciples, and the prayer which he uttered before them, he dwells on the idea so much, that, upon this occasion, he speaks of God as a *father*, no less than *fifty* times. The Apostles also uniformly adopt the same language in all their epistles."

NOTE B.

After, "can confer upon another," page 52.

It is truly said that extremes beget each other. Because the term *Grace* has been injudiciously used by one class of Christians, as if something præternatural or mystic was contained in its signification, others have attempted to banish it entirely from our Scriptures. But they have not as yet found an adequate substitute. The newly-adopted term *favour*, is extremely languid; acting as a sedative to the fervour of a devout mind. It is so frequently applied to every trivial act of civility and kindness, that it is devoid both of dignity and energy. The primitive signification of the word *Grace*, is an

unmerited boon, granted by a superior to one much inferior; and it is peculiarly applicable to an act of clemency; in cases, where, either from the greatness of the offence, or distance in rank and station of the subject, clemency could scarcely have been expected. The pardon of a criminal has always been considered as an *extraordinary act of grace*, in human courts, and human transactions. From these connections have all the Apostles, as if it were with one consent, transplanted, and ennobled the term, by applying it to the pardoning mercy of God, and the benignity of the Son of God, in the œconomy of Man's Salvation. It is surely taking retrogade steps to substitute in its place a word, by which we daily express every trivial act of civility performed, by equals among men, towards each other. We may farther remark, that this innovation is contrary to the idiom of every modern language in Europe, for in every Christian country, a term equivalent to the word *Grace*, is consecrated to those transcendent blessings of Christianity; the pardon of Sins, or redemption from the condemnation of death.

NOTE C.

After "calling and election sure," page 107.

The sentiments we are opposing, and by which many pious and well-disposed minds throw a mist over the clear revelation of God, proceed from their making *personal* application of expressions which have a *general* reference. Those divine energies by which God has determined to operate for the conversion of a sinful world, and bring them to the knowledge and practice

of the truth; (whether it be by miraculous interpositions, in order to convince, alarm, and terrify; or by physical laws, productive of distinguished blessings, or of deep affliction,) are interpreted, by this class of Christians, as being preternaturally directed to *them individually*, with an irresistible energy; to the neglect of others, whose situations are similar. This doctrine cannot possibly escape the imputation of an envied partiality, by no means conducive to the humility of the supposed favourite, and by no means encouraging to the sinner that he may repent and reform. It will be very obvious to every attentive reader, that, in the usual course of things, the providence of God works in perfect conformity to that freedom of choice with which he has honoured his responsible creatures. He places *inducements* before them, operating upon their interests or their gratitude, their hopes or their fears; and he expects that his moral agents will convert them into *motives* for right conduct. When these means shall have succeeded, by awakening consideration, alarming their fears, and implanting desires, which excite to exertions, the first purpose is answered; and they are now entitled to the *assurance* that their arduous endeavours shall always prove successful. Being thus disposed, to *ask*, to *seek*, and to *knock*, they are encouraged by the promise, that they shall *receive*, *find*, and that the door of mercy shall be *opened* unto them. But since he who has the most intimate knowledge of the human heart, and the freest access to it, has never uttered a promise of assistance to the thoughtless, wicked, and profane, while they continue in a state of wickedness, it is presumptuous for

any one to expect a blessing, which is solely promised to the opposite character; for certain it is, that all the personal promises of assistance are confined to immediate applicants.

Another mistake, which obviously misleads them, is the supposition that they magnify God, and humble the creature by these principles; that is, by entertaining principles which no one event in the moral history of the world has authorized them to entertain! The humility of the creature is not manifested by his being acted upon like a machine, but by a consciousness that he has acted *unworthily*, that he has *abused* the distinguished and exalted privilege of free agency. The supposition also erroneously considers man, as having powers and properties of *his own*, so completely unconnected with his Maker, that he is under no influence but of some specific act; has no obligation, unless he be instantaneously, nay, we may add, *miraculously* plucked "as a brand out of the burning;" for no miracle is a greater deviation from the ostensible laws of nature, than such an act. Let us suppose, for a moment, that man is able of himself to practise holiness without divine aid; to resist every temptation, surmount every difficulty and danger, by the natural powers which he possesses, which is a doctrine we have opposed in the text, as being contrary to facts; yet, unless man were *self-created*, or created by another power than the Deity, to whom he owes obedience, all would still be of God. In the strictest sense of the term, both moral and philosophical, he *can do nothing of himself;* for of himself he *is nothing*. Let us, therefore, place our humility in a perception of our

own unworthiness, and not in the conceit that we can be the particular favourites of heaven without a single quality to attract his complacential regard!

Note D.

After, "or of adoption," page 163.

We beg leave to refer the reader to *A Key to the Apostolic Writings, or an Essay to explain the Gospel Scheme, and the principal Words and Phrases the Apostles have used in describing it.* By I. Taylor of Norwich.

This work cannot be read with too much attention, by those who wish to understand the primitive and genuine meaning of scripture language, instead of being satisfied with the *sound* of words to a modern ear. The learned author proves, to a demonstration, that those terms which a particular class of Christians apply to themselves personally, or to the individuals whom they place among the elect, have always a *general* or *national*, and not a *personal* reference. He proves also, as we have stated in a preceding disquisition, that the Israelites were not chosen *on account* of their virtues, but that they *might become virtuous*; and that the greatness of their privileges was always urged upon them as an inducement to piety. They were expected to rejoice, be thankful, and obedient. As he expresses it, the *antecedent* blessings and privileges were in common, the *consequent*, were according to their conduct. The *antecedent* enjoined an obligation; the duty performed entitled them to *consequent* blessings. These positions he illustrates in various ways; and they perfectly correspond with what we have advanced, on *the important ends ob-*

tained by the death of Christ. See Mediatorial Office of Christ, chap. I. sec. 2d.

In both our sentiments, there is an obvious analogy with the doctrines which were formerly agitated by the Armenians and Calvinists, when the popular question was, whether the children of God were elected *because* of their good works, or *that they might perform good works:* accurate notions of which were also, in that day, deemed essential to salvation; and those good works, the cultivation of mutual love, and of a meek and humble spirit, were too frequently suspended, while the debate was at issue. The difficulty vanishes by applying to large bodies the terms which the partizans for particular election always apply to *individuals.*

Note E.

After "the constituent principles of these," page 233.

Several distinguished Theologians have attempted to prove that the common opinion concerning a general resurrection from the dead, at some future period, is a common error: that no one day or period is specifically appointed for a solemnity, which they suppose to be altogether unnecessary: that the resurrection of every individual takes place immediately upon his decease: that he immediately appears before the judgment-seat of God, and his lot is determined for ever.

They have apparently been induced to embrace this opinion from a just dissatisfaction at the popular idea, concerning the resurrection of the corporeal frame, or re-assemblage of specific particles of dust, at a remote period from that in which the departed spirit has received its sentence of approbation or condemnation, and is enjoying the reward of its labours, or suffering for its crimes.

But the whole of our statement under the first division of the present disquisition, powerfully militates against the manner in which they attempt to obviate these difficulties. Their opinion is founded entirely upon an assumption totally destitute of support. They assume it as a fact, that the soul is *necessarily immortal;* and that perpetual consciousness is essential to its spiritual nature. But whence are the evidences of these positions to be deduced? The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are totally silent, concerning the native spirituality and consciousness of man; and the new dispensation uniformly represents *life, immortality,* as the *free gift* of God, after the moral title to it was lost by disobedience. Nor can these sentiments be considered as the obvious deductions of reason. Ignorant Pagans never speculated upon the subject; and philosophic Pagans confessed their embarrassments. These notions are, therefore, hypothetical; but what can be more unsatisfactory than to erect an *opinion* into an undoubted fact, and then attempt, by verbal criticisms and paraphrastic explanations, to change the mighty current of scriptural language, which, in the general opinion of Christians, has run in a contrary channel? It is a difficulty to which nothing but the strongest attachment to hypothesis will submit, to explain away those very numerous passages which uniformly refer to a solemn period, in which the tares shall be separated from the wheat, the goats from the sheep; or to a general resurrection from the dead, by which the righteous and the wicked shall be divided into separate classes. To give a metaphorical or allegorical interpretation to the nume-

rous expressions, apparently of a contrary import, is a dangerous expedient, and those who admit of the positions advanced in the text of the present disquisition, will consider it as unnecessary. Nor will the term Resurrection, which is incessantly used, admit of the interpretation they are compelled to give it. The term, in its genuine signification, is a *recovery, a rising again,* after the subject has lapsed into a state of inactivity. In this sense is it strictly applicable to the restoration of the vital principle, from a state of inconsciousness, into life and action; and even to the re-animation of a specific body, did facts assure us that this body always retains its unity or integrity; but it is in no way applicable to the immediate appearance of the immortal spirit before the throne of God. This is, at once, rising into an immortal state; but not a *resurrection from the dead.*

Note F.

After "in the vegetable creation," page 238.

In the Apology for Christianity, in a series of letters, &c. "written by the Bishop of Landaff, is the following passage:

"The several schools of Gentile philosophy had discussed, with no small subtlety, every argument which reason could suggest, for or against the immortality of the soul; and those uncertain glimmerings of the light of nature, would have prepared the minds of the learned for the reception of the full illustration of this subject by the gospel, had not the Resurrection been a part of the doctrine therein advanced. But that this corporeal frame, which is hourly mouldering away, and

resolved at last into the undistinguished mass of elements from which it was at first derived, should ever be clothed with immortality; that this corruptible should ever put on incorruption; is a truth so far removed from the apprehension of philosophical research, so dissonant from the common conceptions of mankind, that, amongst all ranks and persuasions of men, it was esteemed an impossible thing. At Athens the philosophers had listened with patience to St. Paul, whilst they conceived him but a setter forth of strange Gods; but as soon as they comprehended, that by the αναστασις he meant the Resurrection, they turned from him with contempt. It was principally the insisting upon the same topic, which made Festus think much learning had made him mad. And the questions, "how are the dead raised, and with what body do they come?" seem, by Paul's solicitude to answer them with fulness and precision, to have been not unfrequently proposed to him by those who were desirous of becoming Christians."

Our author adds "the doctrine of a future life then, as promulgated in the gospel, being neither agreeable to the expectations, nor corresponding with the wishes, nor conformable to the reason of the Gentiles, I can conceive no motive, (setting aside the true one, the divine power of its first preachers,) which could induce them to receive it." &c.

Notwithstanding the deference which is due to this very respectable writer, justice to our subject requires us to remark, that his observations upon this point are by no means so satisfactory as upon the other topics in which he is at variance with Mr. Gibbon. He acknowledges

that the resurrection of a corporeal frame, which is hourly mouldering away, and its being clothed with immortality, is a doctrine dissonant from the common conceptions of mankind. But this cannot be the doctrine taught by St. Paul, who expresses his *surprise* that these philosophers should *disbelieve* a fact, which is not less deserving of credit, than certain facts in the economy of nature, which they were compelled to admit. For he refers them, not to the miraculous power of God, but to the laws of vegetation for a solution; which could not be the case, if he maintained that the scattered particles of dust would again be collected into a corporeal frame, and revivified by a spiritual inhabitant, which had forsaken its abode; for the laws of nature furnish no instances of the kind.

The doctrine, as stated by our author, is so difficult to be believed, that it requires very strong evidence, both of its truth and importance, before it can be received as an essential doctrine of Christianity. We have endeavoured to prove that it has no such claim to our belief. That the grand object, *human happiness*, cannot depend upon the resurrection of inanimate matter; for it is obvious that, if the immaterial principle be capable of existing in a conscious state, without a corporeal organization, it is capable of enjoying happiness, or suffering misery, without it. This is uniformly admitted by the advocates for the resuscitation of mere matter. But if this be the fact, with what propriety can the resurrection of the corporeal frame be considered as synonymous with a *future life*, since the spirit of man may exist in a future state, inde-

pendent of it? Yet it is considered as synonymous, in the subsequent passage, which we have quoted, where it is said "the doctrine of a future life, as promulgated in the gospel, being neither agreeable to the expectations," &c. &c.

It appears obvious to us, that the doctrine of the resurrection of the *body* was not the subject in dispute, between the apostle and the gentile philosophers: but it was the resurrection of the *man;* a restoration to lost vitality. Those Heathen philosophers, who entertained any feeble expectations of a future existence, placed all their hopes upon their notions concerning the spirituality and natural immortality of the soul. But this was not the doctrine of the Apostle. He maintained that life and immortality are the *gift* of God; through the death and resurrection of this Jesus whom he preached unto them. He asserts, that if Christ be not arisen, there can be no future existence expected. Those who were fallen a sleep in Jesus are *perished.* This was the statement, so dissonant from the conceptions they had formed of the possibility of a future state, that they despised the preacher and his doctrine.

The elegant writer seems to place the whole force of his argument, upon the expressions "it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." "This corruptible must put on incorruption, &c." Inferring from this mode of expression, that the same essential body will rise again. But the inference is not conclusive. The strong figurative language, so characteristic of the Apostle's style, should inspire caution. In the impetuosity of his thoughts, he despises expletives or paraphras-

tic diction. He makes the freest uses of the ellipsis, leaving it to the reader to supply the deficiency. We are not deviating from his obvious meaning, but rendering it more conspicuous, if we state that the vital principle in man, is sown *with* a corruptible body, it will rise *with* incorruption. It is sown *with* a natural body, it will rise *with* a spiritual body. This mode of explanation is perfectly similar to that we are obliged to apply, in the explanation of many other passages of this figurative writer. " Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and did all drink of the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that *rock was Christ.*"* " *This agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia,*† &c. &c. These expressions demand explanations also.

But the Apostle himself satisfactorily explains his own meaning, when he says, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not *that body that shall be;*—but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." The body of every grain that is sown perishes; but the germinating principle which remains, has been rendered, by the wonderful power of God, capable of generating, not merely a new body for itself, but numerous other bodies possessing entirely the same characteristics. This undoubted, although inexplicable

* 1 Cor. x. 1—3 † Gal. ix. 25.

phænomenon, represents the resurrection of the vital principle in man, as a natural process, much more simple in itself, and much less difficult to be conceived and credited. Who can explain the manner in which the caterpillar is transformed into a dormant chrysalis; or the secret operations by which this rises into a butterfly, gay, lively, and beautiful? But who can deny the fact?

NOTE G.

After, "in a judicial process," page 268.

The truth of the above assertion will appear by attending to the following statement.

In Romans, iii. 20. We translate the word δικαιωθήσεται, *shall be justified.*

Verses 21, 22.	δικαιοσύνη,	*righteousness.*
—— 24.	δικαιουμενοι,	*being justified.*
—— 25, 26.	της δικαιωσυνης,	*his righteousness.*
	δίκαιον,	*just.*
	δικαιοῦνα,	*justifying.*

All these terms are derived from δικη, which signifies justice, in the abstract; whether it be just conduct, a just sentence, just punishment, just acquittal. Every one has a natural right to be merciful; and no criminal has, at any time, resented an act of clemency, as an act of injustice; justice, therefore, cannot exclude those acts of mercy which are authorized by wisdom and discretion, and which offend not either God or Man.

NOTE H.

After "in which the effect is produced," page 286.

Although the admission of our statement, concerning

the object of Christ's death, would make a considerable change in the controversy, yet as a doctrine, denominated the *doctrine of the atonement*, is perpetually enforced by one party of Christians with peculiar energy; and with no small degree of anxiety, for those who reject their opinions concerning it; we shall subjoin a few cursory remarks, in order to evince that the popular opinion is not so well founded, so important, or so honourable to God, as its advocates suppose.

We must observe, that in the warmth of the contest, a deviation has taken place from the primitive and genuine Signification of the term atonement, which in reality constitutes the importance of the doctrine; and the whole attention has been directed to contingent circumstances alone. *Atonement* properly signifies *reconciliation, at one-ment*. Thus in the genuine sense, the doctrine of the *atonement* is synonymous with the doctrine of *reconciliation*. This will be allowed by all Christians to be an essential doctrine of Christianity. The blessings of reconciliation to an offended parent, and to such a parent, are beyond conception great; nor can we be too anxious to obtain it. But since we are clearly acquainted with the conditions, which are *faith and repentance*, it is a matter of inferior importance, whether our notions be perfectly accurate, respecting the *manner* in which the Divine Being has chosen to confer the blessing. In whatever way the death of Christ may have operated to reconcile a sinful world, if the Being offended, who best knows his own plans and purposes, be satisfied with it, we ought to express our joy and gratitude in a very different manner, than by uncharitable contests about the

mode. Had the mode been as clearly revealed as the blessing itself, it could not have been a subject of contest; but no wise and indulgent parent has ever been angry with a docile child, for not comprehending obscurities.

We may farther observe that the strenuous advocates for what is now called the *atonement*, are not agreed in their sentiments concerning its specific nature. Some understand by it, that the sacrifice of Christ was necessary to appease the divine *wrath*, others maintain that a plenary satisfaction to the demands of *the law* was absolutely necessary, before pardon could be conferred. Some speak of the *personal* justice of God, and his offended majesty, demanding an *equivalent*, without which they deprive him of the power or the right, to pardon the offences of his own family. Other advocates for the doctrine are more moderate in their assertions. They represent the Deity as accepting of the meritorious sacrifice of his son, in lieu, or in place of a plenary satisfaction; and they justly maintain, that if the Deity accept of this kind of compensation, we have no right to object.

It is to be observed, that the peculiar sentiments which have thus assumed the title of the *doctrine of the atonement*, instead of being expressly *revealed*, are simply *inferences*, founded upon some particular expressions, which were uttered at different times, and by different Apostles, and occasioned by contingent circumstances. As the following statement will shew:

The word *atonement*, of which such frequent use is made, in our modern systems of theology, occurs but *once* in our English translation of the New Testament; where it is manifestly substituted for *reconciliation*. The

Greek word being the same which our translators had twice rendered *reconciled* in the preceding verse.

It is in Romans, ch. v. 10, 11. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son καλλλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ; much more being reconciled, καλαλλαγεντες, we shall be saved by his life, and not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the *reconciliation* δι οὗ νὺν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ελαβομεν.

The word *satisfaction*, upon which so important a stress is laid, in our theological systems, as expressive of the complete pacification of the divine wrath, or the fulness of the price paid down to divine justice, is not to be found in the New Testament.

Propitiation (ιλαστηρίον, ιλασμος,) is used once by St. Paul, Rom. iii. 25, and twice by the Apostle John, 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10.

Redeem, redemption, (λυτροσις απολοῖρωσις) are too frequently used by St. Paul, to admit of references, once by St. Peter, 1 Peter i. 18; and thrice in the apocalypse, Rev. v. 9; xiv. 3, 4.

Ransom (αντίλυτρος) is used once by St. Paul in his Epistle to Timothy, 1 Tim. ii. 6.

The words *offering*, or *offered*, and *sacrifice*, (θυσια) as referring to the death of Christ, *are used by the Apostle Paul alone*, admitting him to have written to the Hebrews; *once* in reference to the passover, in his Epistle to the Cor. 1 Cor. v. 7; *once* in that to the Ephesians, ch. v. 2; and although the word *sacrifice* is so often repeated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is not applied to Jesus in more than *four* instances.

Advocate, (παρακλητος), is once used by St. John. 1 John ii. 1.

Mediator (μεσιτης) is solely used by the Apostle Paul, once in his writing to the Galatians, iii. 19, 20; and thrice to the Hebrews, viii. 6; ix. 15; xii. 24.

Intercession, to *make intercession*, ἐντυγχάνειν is once applied to Christ, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, vii. 25.

The blood of Christ, referring, to his crucifixion, which every scheme of theology acknowledges to be an event of the utmost importance, is frequently mentioned, by St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews; by St. John and St. Peter; and various are the benefits which they represent as flowing from it. Sometimes it is considered as the medium of *redemption*, of *peace*, of *reconciliation*, of *justification;* sometimes as *ratifying a covenant;* often as *sanctifying, cleansing from all sin, purifying the conscience from dead works;* but NEVER as *quenching the divine wrath*, and as a *compensation to divine justice.*

The expression *bare our sins* αμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν, is once used by St. Peter. 1 Pet. ii. 24; and not by any other Apostle.

Should there be any slight errors in the above statement, or trifling omissions, they will not be sufficient to invalidate the following

Remarks.

1. The habitual preference of any other terms, to express the leading articles of a system, than those which were used by the primitive preachers of christianity, is a tacit acknowledgment, that no part of their copious phraseology is adapted to the doctrines which some have supposed them to teach; and this natu ally awakens a

suspicion that such doctrines were not intended; otherwise these teachers would have preferred expressions equally significant. Had they entertained the opinion that the death of Christ was a complete compensation for the sins of men, which is the prevailing theological idea annexed to *atonement;* or that it was to appease the wrath of the father of mankind, or satisfy his justice, which is implied in the word *satisfaction,* they would not have expressed themselves so feebly, as to render it necessary for succeeding teachers to substitute stronger language.

2. The popular doctrine of the atonement is obviously formed from the above passages by viewing them *collectively*; some points of the doctrine being deduced from the one, and some from the other. Each single passage is much too imperfect and defective to contain all the principles ascribed to the whole. Not one of the above expressions, considered singly, conveys an explicit declaration, that true believers are reconciled to an angry and offended God, or a stern judge who will not relax an iota of the demands of justice, without the full price or ransom paid by the sufferings of Jesus. This is a doctrine deduced from those occasional expressions collected together, and compelled by forced inferences to speak such language. But as some of the Apostles have been totally silent concerning these leading points, they must have given very partial views of the gospel. Peter, James, and Jude, have omitted to observe that Christ was a propitiation for sin; and when Peter speaks of *redemption,* he applies it to the Christian converts being redeemed from their vain conversation, and not from the

wrath of God, or demands of divine justice. All the Apostles, excepting St. Paul, are chargeable with a total silence, concerning what is deemed so important an article as the *atonement*, or expiatory sacrifice, for none of them use the terms that can appear in any respect equivalent, excepting this Apostle. Nor does *he* speak copiously upon the subject, excepting in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Thus are the Hebrews the only Christian converts who have been made perfectly acquainted with all the important doctrines of Christianity! This is the more extraordinary, as St. Paul was professedly the Apostle of the *Gentiles!*

3. The great diversity of expressions, used by different Apostles, some adopting one mode, some another, is perfectly correspondent with that diversity of manner which may be adopted with great propriety, in expatiating upon doctrines already known, and representing their importance in different points of view, but they are not calculated to establish principles which were unknown before; and whoever examines the passages to which we refer, will find that every one of them are urged as *arguments* or *motives*, and not didactically laid down, as essential articles of faith.

4. This being the fact, it is natural to expect a more copious use of varied phraseology, from the most animated, copious, and zealous of the Apostles; and this was eminently the character of St. Paul, who has made a much more extensive use of such phrases than any other Apostle; and without his writings the sentiments concerning the atonement, we are now opposing, could not have existed. If such sentiments be true, he is the only

one who has fully preached the genuine doctrines of the gospel!

5. In our philosophical treatise, we took occasion to remark that the language of the passions and affections is totally different from that of simple precept, and cool investigation. When the passions are raised, or the affections strongly engaged, the language becomes impetuous and vigorous, according to the strength of the emotion. The imagination eagerly catches at those points of resemblance, which are most favourable to the interesting subject agitated; whereas the language of investigation is plain and simple, carefully avoiding metaphorical allusions, which are not for the immediate purpose of elucidation. The style of our great Apostle singularly illustrates these remarks. Where he persuades, encourages, admonishes, and reproves, and is animated with the subject in debate, no man is more figurative; and it is the ardent impetuosity of his mind, which sometimes rendered him obscure to his contempories, and not unfrequently to more modern readers. But the language of no man is more simple, unadorned, and intelligible, than in his narrative of facts, or in his didactic instructions. We might adduce as instances, the conspicuous manner in which he taught the essential principles of Christianity, in his travels; the plain and simple manner in which he recommends the commemoration of the death of his Lord and Master; but his Epistle to Timothy and Titus, are so illustrative of our subject that they demand a moment's attention.

As these disciples were young men of sincere piety, and docile minds, requiring neither persuasion nor

reprehension, but simply instruction in the leading doctrines or principles of their future ministry, he addresses them in the most plain and simple language; and it is most worthy of notice, that in these Epistles that peculiar phraseology is not to be found, which is the basis of the sentiments we are opposing; nor any other which conveys similar ideas.

These could not have been omitted if such sentiments were essential to the Christian creed; for he is professedly giving instructions to young converts, in order to prepare them for preaching the gospel. The only doctrinal points mentioned in the first Epistle to Timothy are the following: "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."*---"God our Saviour will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an Apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in truth and verity."† "We trust in the living God who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe."‡

In the second Epistle to Timothy, all the doctrines mentioned are in the following passage: "God, who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death,

* 1 Tim. i. 15. † Ibid. ii. 4. 7. ‡ Ibid. iv. 8.

and hath brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel."*

The only doctrines, or rather principal facts, which as Christians we are required to believe, for in the language of the New Testament the word *doctrine* always relates to Christian duties, and not to particular opinions---the only articles pertaining to the Christian faith mentioned in the Epistle to Titus, are the following: "But after that the kindness and love of God towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."‡

Such are the principles and such the language of this highly figurative writer, when he means to instruct in the essential articles of our faith!

6. It is confidently asserted, that the sacrifices instituted under the law were *typical* of the sacrifice of Christ; and their atoning virtue is ascribed to this cause. But we may ask how can this statement agree with the *total omission* of most of the Apostles to mention so important a circumstance? No one mentioned this as an article of faith in their first establishment of Christianity. No one, excepting St. Paul, forms a comparison between the sacrifices under the law, and the death of our Saviour; nor do any of his references express the sentiments adopted by our opponents. He simply mentions to the

* 2 Tim. i. 9. † Titus, ii. 4--7.

Corinthians, that "Christ our passover was sacrificed for us." When he exhorts the Ephesians, "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour;" he makes no mention of his having appeased the divine wrath, or satisfied the demands of divine justice: and when, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, a comparison is made between the death of Christ, and the sacrifices under the law, the attention of the writer is confined to the inefficacy of the Jewish sacrifices to answer a permanent purpose, in which they differed essentially from the sacrifice of him, who died "once for all," for the benefit of mankind.

The argument urged in favour of the hypothesis that the sacrifices under the law were typical of the death of Christ; and that as these were decidedly sacrifices of *atonement*, it follows that the death of Christ must be an atonement for sin, is specious, but when closely examined it will appear too feeble to support the hypothesis.

When it is said that the sacrifices under the law, were *typical* of the death of Christ, the idea conveyed is, that they were *promissory* or *prophetic tokens*. But surely if this were the object, it would have been stated in some part of the Old Testament. Moses, the great institutor of these sacrifices, speaks no such language; the ancient Jews knew nothing of this characteristic; the modern Jews disregard it; and to Christians it is entirely useless!

The argument is solely founded upon *one* occasional

and metaphorical expression of St. Paul. In his Epistle to the Corintians,* he alludes to various events in the Jewish history, by way of admonition to the new converts from Judaism to Christianity. In several of which the resemblances are much too general and feeble to deserve the character of being *typical*, as defined above. He compares the passing of their fathers under a cloud, and through the sea, to the ordinance of baptism. He terms the manna in the wilderness spiritual meat, and the water flowing from the rock, spiritual drink; this rock, he says, is Christ. He reminds them that three and twenty thousand of the Israelites fell in one day, for committing fornication; referring to their having commerce with the daughters of Moab, in Shittim, and sacrificing to their gods; that when they murmured against God and his servant Moses, they were bitten by fiery serpents. Now all these things happened unto them for *ensamples*, or *types*. But could these events have happened, that they might be either *promissory* and *predictive?* St. Paul points out to the Galatians, a resemblance between the two sons of Abraham,—the one born of a bonds-woman, after the flesh, the other of the free woman according to promise,—and the two covenants, the covenant of works and that of grace, but are we to consider these circumstances in any other light, than as comparisons? Were they ordained in order to furnish our apostle with an allegory? and yet they were as typical of events relative to the Christian dispensation, as the sacrifices under the law. Will our theologians suspend a doctrine which they deem so weighty in itself, upon so slender a fila-

* 1 Cor. x.

ment? Was this the manner in which St. Paul established the divine mission of Jesus, the doctrines of his meritorious death, triumphant resurrection, and the forgiveness of sins through faith in his name?

In ancient days, when the multitude were grossly ignorant and illiterate, impressions could only be made upon their minds, by signs and tokens. Rude pillars of stone were erected, instead of monumental inscriptions. The slaughter of the pascal lamb, and placing it at the postern of the door; was commanded to the Hebrews, and by the observance of this command, the Deity engaged not to inflict upon them the calamity which impended upon the unbelieving Egyptians. The feast of unleavened bread, and subsequently the feast of tabernacles, were instituted as commemorative of the peculiar interposition and protection of providence. We are informed, that the brasen serpent was erected in the wilderness, and those who looked up to it were cured of their wounds. This might have been appointed, the more effectually to convince them of a miraculous interposition in their favour. The confession of the sins of the people upon the head of the scape goat, and afterwards letting it loose in the wilderness, was a most impressive token, a full assurance, that the Israelites were absolved from every act of disobedience and rebellion, of which they had been guilty in the earlier stages of their political existence. These were acts very remote from every idea of an *atoning sacrifice.* The pascal lamb was slain without any of those rituals which were required in an acceptable sacrifice for sin. The brazen serpent was neither slain nor crucified; and yet there were points of resemblance

which attracted the notice, the one of our Saviour, and the other of St. Paul. The most striking emblem of the divine forgiveness, upon record under the first dispensation, was the injunction respecting the scape goat, which was conveyed away to be for ever lost in the wilderness; but this was not sacrificed. The goat that was sacrificed was a striking emblem of their *demerit;* that which escaped, was a striking token of the *most perfect reconciliation;* an assurance that the Lord had pardoned their iniquities, transgressions, and sins.

The modern ideas of atonement are manifestly founded upon misconceptions, respecting the particular object of the sacrifices under the law. They were undoubted acts of atonement, according to the *primitive* and *genuine* signification of the term; for they were the appointed mediums of *reconciliation.* The right performance of these sacrifices was the established condition of pardon, respecting the particular offence, for which they were ordained. As we have already observed, the intrinsic value, and the peculiar solemnities to be observed, were diversified by the law, according to the degrees of moral turpitude in the offence committed. Thus, while each sacrifice was an indication of demerit, it was also a lesson of refined morality.

May we not suspect that the idea of literally appeasing the divine wrath, is of a Pagan origin? It is in perfect unison with the ideas which the Pagans had formed concerning their deities, as possessing human passions, and human appetites. These induced them to imagine that they could compensate for their crimes, by bringing acceptable gifts to the altars of their gods.

The modern ideas affixed to an *atonement*, were neither expressed nor intimated by Moses, when he instituted the Jewish rituals, nor is there any evidence that they were entertained by the pious among the Jews. But at the corrupted periods of Judaism, particularly among the ten revolted tribes, a depraved race attempted to worship Jehovah, by an intermixture of Pagan superstitions. They imbibed many of their erroneous principles, deeming them of intrinsic efficacy; and ultimately, they imagined, like the Pagans, that their sacrifices and oblations, their observances of fasts, sabbaths, &c. would not only compensate for every crime they were determined to commit, but become a *substitute* for reformation. This perverse disposition was severely rebuked by their prophets. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, &c. &c. When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea when ye make many prayers I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well,"* &c. &c.

These remarks evince, that no other efficacy has been ascribed to the sacrifices under the law, when they were observed with the greatest purity, than as they were tokens of conscious demerit and of penitence. In this case they were considered as *atonements*; that is, accepted as the mediums of reconciliation.

* Isaiah i, 11. passim.

In order to prevent the Israelites from intermixing any conceits and devices of their own, or adopting any of the pagan ceremonies, particular rules were minutely laid down, the strict observance of which was necessary to render their sacrifices acceptable. The *Priest alone* was permitted to officiate. The animal appointed by the law was to be sacrificed in a particular place, and in a particular manner, or the whole transaction was deemed criminal. "What man soever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or a goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the Lord, before the tabernacle of the Lord, blood shall be imputed to that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people, &c. The *Priest* shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the Lord, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savour unto the Lord,"* &c.

Can such accurate laws and solemn injunctions, typically represent the death of Christ, who was murdered by wicked men? The ancient sacrifices were offered by the express appointment of God; Jesus was sacrificed from a principle of hatred and resentment; a principle the most opposite to a devout confession of sins. The deed was so atrocious, that the whole Jewish nation was punished for it, and their posterity will remain in disgrace, until they disavow this crime of their ancestors.

Thus we perceive that there is no solid foundation in

* See Levit. xvii.

the sacred scriptures, for a doctrine upon which so much stress is laid. We may add that reason opposes it in every stage, and in every representation of it. It is a strange idea, that the anger of God can only be appeased by the death of his Son, in whom he was always well pleased! It is a strange idea that God cannot forgive a personal injury, without a full satisfaction, or some degree of compensation, which in effect annihilates an act of grace; annihilates a sense of obligation towards the offended party; and transfers it to the benevolent Sponsor! Respecting the requisitions of the law, these are fully satisfied when the constituted penalty is inflicted, whatever may be the nature of the penalty. The object of all penalties is to enforce the observance of laws; the object of all laws is to promote some kind or degree of good. Few, very few are the cases in which a nice balance can be observed, between the atrocity of the offence and the nature of the punishment. It is, perhaps, impracticable, where great injuries have been committed; unless the injuries consisted in the deprivation of property, by one who possesses wealth sufficient to make ample restitution. The execution of a murderer will not restore the murdered person to life, or indemnify his family for the loss sustained. The law of retaliation will not restore an eye, or a tooth, to the party injured. From these instances it is obvious that the demands of the law are answered, not by *paying an equivalent* for the offence, but by submitting to its penalties. Even in this case justice is not always inexorable. Justice always demands that the guilty should not be declared to be *innocent*; but *human* laws, sanguinary

as they too often are, do not preclude mercy; and to deny to the Deity the power of pardoning offences, without indemnification, is laying a restriction upon him to which no earthly potentate would submit. It is advancing a principle in Ethics, which prohibits the forgivenness of an injury! For it is our duty to imitate God in all moral excellence; and if we thus imitate him in not being *unjust to ourselves*, we shall certainly become revengeful towards others! Once more—

The Apostle Paul, upon whose peculiar phraseology the hypothesis we oppose is founded, expatiates with more ardour upon the free abundant grace of God, in the salvation of man, than any other of the Apostles. To quote all the passages which would prove the truth of this assertion, would be to transcribe too large a portion of his Epistles. He introduces his Epistle to the Hebrews by asserting, that Jesus Christ was sent by the Father, as the last messenger from heaven, to instruct and save mankind. If he represents Christ as a propitiation for sin, we are told that "*God has set him forth* to be a propitiation;" and that "the redemption that is in Christ, is by the free grace of God." If Christ died while we were yet sinners, it was because "God commended his love towards us, and because God spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all." The following passage is too expressive to be omitted, and so comprehensive, that farther citations from him will be unnecessary. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their

trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are embassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled unto God."* St. John expresses the same idea in the following manner: "In this was manifest the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.†

Such language is so perspicuous and decisive, that one might suppose it to have been the object of the Apostles to confute the sentiments which have been entertained, through a misconception of less definite expressions. They direct our primary attention to the fountain of all good, whose unpurchased commiseration, and parental affections, have planned and executed the scheme of man's redemption.

We are the more strenuous in our opposition to the sentiments under consideration, because they are so inconsistent with the encouraging character of a *Parent;* the revelation and developement of which constitutes the grand excellency of the Christian dispensation. We have largely shewn the condescending affection with which the universal Father has supported this character through all its offices; and shall a few occasional and equivocal expressions convert him, in our opinion, into the inexorable judge?—Proposing conditions of pardon, at which every earthly parent would revolt? Who, amongst the sons of men, would demand the punish-

* 2 Cor. iv. 18. 20. † 1 John ii. 10.

ment of the most meritorious of his offspring, as a condition of his receiving the most rebellious into his favour? Who would not run and embrace the returning penitent, without demanding a compensation of any kind? and exclaim, with transports of joy, "this my son was dead, and is alive again, was lost and is found?"

Note I.

After "to the glory of God the Father." Page 320.

The ambiguous phraseology used by the apostle in the passage quoted in the text, has given rise to various inferences of a speculative nature; and it is much to be lamented that the eagerness with which speculative opinions have been supported or opposed, has too much diverted the attention of Christians from the primary design of the writer. This was not to give a dissertation upon the metaphysical nature of Christ, but to expatiate upon his voluntary humiliation for the benefit of man; and the exaltation he enjoyed in consequence of what he has done and suffered for, a sinful world. The passage before us is singular; but it does not attempt to introduce a doctrine unknown before. Nor is it sufficiently explicit to merit the character of an express revelation. It is manifestly a reference to some peculiarity respecting the Son of God, with which the Philippians were not unacquainted. We shall state the following explanation, the principles of which no disputant will controvert, should he not admit that the statement comprehends the whole of the apostle's meaning.

All the rational creatures of God are frequently termed

his offspring. By this honourable appellation they are distinguished from every inferior creature that has life. When Moses informs us that God created man in his own image, no one has inferred that we are of the same essence; this would be an actual participation, not a likeness, or image, which implies a likeness in some respects, where there is an essential difference in others. It can only relate to those intellectual and moral powers, with which it has pleased the Deity to invest man; by which he is elevated above the brute creation, and enabled to exercise dominion over them. But, what is of much greater importance, by the capacity of discerning between good and evil, in moral conduct, we are enabled to promote our own well-being, and that of others, to a degree that shall make existence a permanent blessing. Whatever distance there may be in the *physical* nature of man, in his mental and moral endowments, he is honoured by a likeness to his Creator. But unhappily, as yet, we resemble him alone in the *possession* of such powers, and not in the *exercise* of them; for this would render us perfect in our sphere as he is perfect.

But Jesus, in his *moral* character, bore the closest resemblance to his heavenly Father. For he was perfect in all things. Therefore was he without controversy, infinitely more in the form and image of the Holy God, than those, whose sinful frailties place them at so remote a distance.

Since the Saviour of the world was, in the excellencies of his moral character, the express image, and the brightness of his Father's glory; he was, according to the established law of Morals, entitled to an exemption

from every suffering; for all sufferings are inflicted by a just Being, either as chastisements, or the more severe legal punishments. He was entitled to all that felicity which the moral governor will communicate to perfect beings; but he waved these claims, in obedience to his Father, and in love to mankind. He voluntarily suffered the afflictions of life, submitted to a painful and ignominious death, and was made under the law of condemnation, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and thus, for his voluntary humiliation and sufferings, was he crowned with glory and honour. He was the image of God in his moral perfections; and, as the natural heir of his Father, had he a right to enter immediately upon the inheritance of the perfect sons of God. Yet he was not eager, or precipitate to seize so great an honour, but he divested himself of every enjoyment, and took upon himself the form of a servant; "wherefore has God highly exalted him above his fellow immortals, and given him a name which is above every name."

Note K.

After, "revere him as our future judge." Page 330.

The exalted character sustained by the Messiah, the power and authority with which he is invested, the great benefits received, and which are farther expected from him, will naturally prompt grateful and affectionate hearts to present their petitions to him; and those who consider him as being equal to the Father, must deem him to be equally entitled to the acts of supplication,

adoration, and praise. But this mode of testifying our confidence, gratitude and veneration, has not the stamp of authority, either from precept or example. Notwithstanding he had declared when upon earth, that "the Son of Man has power to forgive sins;" that "all power is given to me in heaven and earth," yet he uniformly directs his disciples to pray to the Father exclusively. "When ye pray, say our Father who is in heaven." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he shall give it you." His whole life was a life of prayer to the Father. To him did he ascribe all the eminent powers with which he was endowed; to him he applied for consolation and support, in his arduous conflicts; and to him did he commit his spirit when he expired on the cross. He incessantly directed the attention of his followers to the Source of all good. "When one came running to him saying, good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life; he transferred the title of good to the Lord of life. Jesus said unto him, "why callest thou me good, there is none good, but one, that is God."

Thus, although he has declared that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; that all men should honour the Son as they honour the father," this honour cannot consist in presenting unto him divine worship.

All the apostles obeyed his precepts and imitated his example. After he was exalted at the right hand of God, to be a Prince and a Saviour, and to give repentance and remission of Sin, they invariably prayed to the Father in his name, without venturing to draw an infeence apparently so honourable to him; but which

would have been a deviation both from his precepts and practice.

These are facts which surpass every inference, and ought to suppress all those which are in direct opposition to them.

The Father is constantly represented as the fountain of all Good. He is universally present; he is always willing to bestow. Why then should the natural course of supplication be changed, and petitions be presented to the Son, as if the Father was reluctant to hear us? Christ is not the vicegerent of an *absent* God; and does it not appear to be both indecent, and irreverent, to give him the preference, in the *presence* of his Father? He has pointed out a more acceptable way of showing our respect, reverence, and gratitude. "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

NOTE L.

After "to the age, and beyond it." Page 356.

Our readers must perceive that in this series of disquisitions, it is impracticable to treat each subject to any great extent. Our principal object has been to point out the important relation which these subjects bear to each other; to investigate the principles by which a concatenation is maintained; and to adduce arguments in support of them. We must therefore refer to other authors for amplification. No polemical question can be of equal importance with the question now before us. In its two extremes it stands thus: will a God of infinite goodness, possessing infinite power, and infinite wisdom, act in every respect in a manner

conformable with the character of a kind Parent, in which he has condescended to represent himself, and finally render all his intelligent offspring happy? Or does this dispensation of Grace, of which the apostles always speak with raptures, consist in the election of a few to eternal happiness, announcing the condemnation of myriads and myriads to eternal misery, because it has not pleased the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation, to elect them also? The arguments, upon which this horrid doctrine of eternal misery is founded, are deduced from three or four equivocal expressions, to which our opponents are determined to give their own interpretation; notwithstanding they have been vigorously attacked on every side;—on the side of reason;—the preponderancy of scriptural expressions of a contrary import;—and the most judicious criticisms upon such passages which seemed to be involved in obscurity. We might refer to numberless authors who have written satisfactorily upon this interesting subject. But we shall refer to three alone, as being sufficiently ample to supply our own deficiency. See *Thoughts on the divine Goodness relative to the government of moral agents, particularly displayed in future rewards and punishments.* Translated from the French of *Ferdinand Olivier Petitpierre.* 1788. This author chiefly deduces his arguments from the moral perfections of God, but without omitting various other considerations.

See also *an Essay on the duration of a Future State of Punishments and Rewards: in essays on the language of Scripture.* By J. Simpson, Bath. 1806.

This accurate biblical critic has collected together

all the passages in which the terms, αἰων αἰωνος, are applied to future punishments, and has minutely examined the same terms, when applied to various other subjects; by which mode he has clearly evinced the extreme absurdity of confounding these words with absolute eternity. His observations confirm our assertion, that the signification of *everlasting*, must, in every case, be ascertained by the nature of the subject to which it is immediately applied. He has also examined, with similar attention, every other word which is applied to the wicked; and the result of his examination is, that such expressions are so diversified in their significations, according to the subjects with which they are connected, that they cannot constitute the basis of any system whatever.

In a *Vindication of the honour of God; or a Scriptural refutation of eternal Misery, and universal Salvation*, published 1792, the learned author has proved, in a most satisfactory manner, that the terms *death, destruction, perdition, &c.* cannot signify a life of eternal misery. He considers them, also, as equally opposing the doctrine of universal redemption. This obviously arises from his inattention to the undeniable fact, that there will be a resuscitation of the wicked also, in opposition to the current opinion, that death, destruction, &c. are synonymous with total annihilation.

Respecting the controversy concerning an intermediate state, the natural immortality of the soul, the sleep of the soul, &c. &c. See the works of *Archdeacon Blackburn*, vol. ii. iii.

It is with no small degree of satisfaction to the author

of the present Disquisition, that the sentiments he entertains in consequence of his diligent researches, without previously consulting any other author, correspond in so many respects with those of Mr. Locke, in his treatise on the reasonableness of Christianity; particularly in his conceptions respecting the punishment denounced against sin under the Jewish dispensation. In his paraphrase on the epistle to the Romans, v. 18, he has the following expression: "Therefore, as by one's offence, (viz. Adam's eating the forbidden fruit,) all men fall under the condemnation of death; so, by one act of righteousness, (viz. Christ's obedience to death upon the cross,) all men are restored to life. For as, by one man's disobedience, many were brought into a state of mortality, which is the state of sinners; so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous, i. e. be restored to life again, as if they were not sinners." He observes in a note, that "eternal life is no where, in sacred scripture, mentioned as the portion of all men, but only of the saints.

Dr. Taylor also has proved, with a force of argument which cannot be resisted, that the punishment of sin, is natural death. See his Key to the Romans.

Had either of these gentlemen pursued the subject to its due extent, this Disquisition would have been unnecessary. We may also refer to the arguments adduced in "the vindication of the honour of God," &c. as being satisfactory upon this point.

NOTE M.

After "magnitude of these perversions." Page 386.

In the course of our enquiries, we have had repeated

evidences that the divine Being, in his conduct towards his moral Offspring, always acts in a manner correspondent with the powers and faculties with which they are endowed, in connection with their freedom of Choice. They can pursue or shun, adopt or reject, use or abuse, every thing around them, and every faculty they enjoy. We have strong assurances that at an early period of human existence, mankind were endowed with a competent knowledge of their Maker, to enable them to serve him acceptably. But by giving the reins to wild conceits of their own, and by an affectation of wisdom, they finally "knew not God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened."

A similar mode of conduct on the part of the Deity, and a similar abuse, are no less obvious respecting this new dispensation. When the Christian religion was first revealed to Man, it consisted of a few Principles, necessary to be known, and competent to make man wise unto salvation. But these principles were as seed sown in a field fertile in weeds of every description; which choaked the word, and rendered it infinitely less fruitful than if it had been sown in ground duly prepared for its reception. Ignorance, inveterate prejudices, and a disposition to pervert, were most inimical to its primitive simplicity. The Jewish converts were reluctant to forsake entirely the Religion of their forefathers; and they intermixed with Christianity some of the Jewish rites. The next step was to compel the Gentile converts to submit also to the same rites. When the Converts became numerous, Churches, or Christian communities, were established in different places. The members of these

communities brought with them their various prejudices and predilections. Some attempted to introduce idolatrous customs, eating meats consecrated to idols: others were even guilty of incest; others changed the commemoration of our Lord's death into festive intemperance: others quarrelled about the superiority of the gifts with which they had been endowed for their mutual edification; and forgetting the humility of their Lord and Master, sought preeminence according to the supposed dignity of their office; others manifested a contentious attachment to particular teachers, valuing themselves for being the disciples of Paul, Silas, Apollos; and excited warm animosities respecting some supposed differences in their tenets.

The Apostles wrote to the different Churches, in order to correct these abuses as they arose. They reproved, exhorted, reasoned, and admonished, with a warmth and energy of language, well adapted to convince and persuade. Each Apostle conveyed his instructions in a style and manner peculiar to himself. Their language was, in general, well understood by the converts to whom their Epistles were addressed; but their varied phraseology has, in its turn, become a source of contention and animosity to subsequent converts; who, not attending to the particular state of the Christian churches, and ignorant of the force and idioms of language, have hastily drawn inferences from single expressions; and boldly established doctrines upon these inferences, which have multiplied to such an extent, that the primitive doctrines of Christ and his Apostles have lain completely buried under the loads of these adventitious materials. In the

age of the Apostles, the metaphysical notions of the Gnostics, deeply contaminated Christianity; and at a subsequent period, the Platonic Philosophy excited commotions about the person of Christ: Until inveterate animosities were consecrated into pious zeal, and the most dreadful imprecations assumed the aspect of Orthodox Creeds!

In this statement modern Christians of every denomination must acquiesce. For to whatever sect or party they may belong, they suppose that their conceptions of the "truth as it is in Jesus" are the most pure, and consequently that errors are multiplied, in exact proportion to the diversity of opinions which exist distinct from their own.

NOTE N.

After "most distressing to the human mind." Page 388.

Although some polemical divines think it their duty to submit their reason to, what they deem to be, the revelation of God, yet they sometimes surrender this most invaluable gift with reluctance. But when they attempt to reason, it is in a manner which no logician will admit. They *create principles*, which they suppose will give the appearance of rationality to their favourite tenets. Thus, in order to vindicate the divine justice in the eternal misery of the wicked, they strenuously urge the *infinite malignity of sin*, in its being committed against an *infinitely* holy and perfect Being; and this renders it deserving of *infinite* punishment. It is upon this position that they erect the doctrine, that the *infinite* justice of God demands an *infinite* punishment for the sins which

have not been effaced by the *infinite merits* of Christ's atonement!

To expose the fallacy of these arbitrary assumptions to the due extent, would lead us far beyond the limits of a note. A few remarks may suffice.

The malignancy of sin is a term in familiar use, in order duly to impress upon the mind a proper sense of its pernicious and detestable nature. Nor can that which is offensive to the Deity, and destructive of human happiness, be marked by too opprobrious a name. When this is the object, we aim not at philosophical precision, in our choice of words, but prefer the emphasis they possess, or their power to make an impression upon the affections, to the rules of rigid propriety. But in our researches after truth, it is of the first moment that we entertain *accurate* ideas of every term employed; much less can this accuracy be dispensed with, respecting an expression which constitutes the basis of our reasoning.

Malignant, malignancy, malignity, primarily relate to a malicious disposition, prompting its possessor to injure another, or to be gratified at the perception of his suffering evil. It is distinguished from the sudden resentments of passion, however violent, from its being deep, inveterate, permanent; deliberately disposing the mind to deeds of mischief. The terms are figuratively transferred from hence, to such causes of human misery as have a permanent character, and are extensive in their baneful influence, as malignant diseases, malignant atmospheres: astrologers speak of the stars as having a malignant aspect. The terms are seldom applied to

human actions, of the most pernicious tendency, unconnected with the *motives* of action. The most destructive wars have been carried on for years, without acquiring the character of malignancy; because such wars are professedly carried on for the public good. But when human actions arise from contracted and selfish motives, and the welfare of numbers is sacrifieed to the interests of individuals, they begin to have a malignant aspect; although the leading principle may not literally deserve the character of malignancy; the effects being universally baneful, without the possibility of public good, they appear to proceed from a malignant origin. In this connection is the term applicable to the commission of sin, which always produces baneful effects, according to the extent of its influence.

The malignity of sin, therefore, consists in its natural and invariable tendency to produce evil. Whenever this evil is the deliberate result of a malevolent temper, it manifests the depth of depravity centred in the human heart; the unqualified venom of the mind, without any of those palliatives which are sometimes allowed to crimes from other causes.

It is most obvious that, when we speak of the malignity of sin, the effects are confined to man, or to the creatures which suffer from the cruelty of man. They cannot extend to the Deity; nor is it characteristic of sin that it is committed, from deliberate hatred and malevolence, against the great source of all good. Although it is an offence against the righteous Laws of heaven, it produces no baneful effects upon them. These Laws suffer no injury. Their dignity is not in the least

diminished. Their transcendent and immutable excellency brings disgrace upon the disobedient, but they remain as unsullied as the meridian sun, from the noxious vapours ascending towards heaven. Nor can disobedience reflect dishonour upon the divine Legislator, whose sole object in enacting his laws, is the good of mankind; God, in the character of Legislator, is angry with the wicked every day; but the cause of his displeasure is, that they are doing injury to themselves and others, not that they are committing an affront against their Lawgiver. This would be to suppose, that his felicity could be disturbed by a spirit of resentment. The infinite *malignancy* of sin is, therefore, totally inapplicable to the relation in which we stand, respecting the Deity.

But if malignancy consists in the baneful effects it produces, can we suppose that a wise and good Being will decree to perpetuate those effects to all eternity? If he be angry with the wicked for inducing transcient evils upon themselves and others, will he imitate and infinitely exceed the example he detests, by rendering misery eternal?

In our Ethical treatise, we attempted to obtain accurate ideas of the nature of Justice, as a social virtue.* We observed, that every one has a something which he is entitled to call *his own*, which cannot be invaded without injustice; and as all property is valued in consequence of its powers to produce some species of good, whoever defrauds of property, defrauds also of the good which might have been enjoyed. The essence of injustice

* See Part ii. Ch. ii.

consists in its intending or committing an unmerited injury.

But although no one has a right to deprive another of his property, every man has a right to *relinquish his own claim*; and if it has been unjustly taken from him, he still retains the right to *forgive* the offence, if he be so disposed. No one has at any time denied this right to man, and who shall deny it to the Father of mercies?

We have farther stated, that one characteristic of justice is, that it forbids exacting from others more than their talents, situations, and powers, moral or physical, enable them to accomplish. For this is to demand an impossibility. Nor can any one, with justice, inflict a punishment which exceeds the offence, for the surplus becomes itself an offence. But unless the human race possessed infinite unerring knowledge of the divine laws, infinite desires to perform it, for they demand the obedience of the *heart*, and infinite powers for the purpose, they cannot deserve infinite punishment: for infinitely more is expected of them than, in the present imperfect state, they can possibly accomplish; and to inflict infinite misery would be an act of infinite injustice and cruelty.

It hath been said, that sin is an offence against the infinite *majesty* of God, and, therefore, possesses infinite demerit. We answer, that the majesty of God cannot possibly, suffer an injury from the disobedience of the most exalted of his creatures; how can it be endangered, then, by the offences of feeble men? The extreme distance between the party offended, and the offender, is usually an alleviation of the crime; how does it become, in this case, so tremendous an ag-

gravation? No sovereign, possessing a solid understanding, will be so greatly offended at any mark of disrespect committed by an ignorant peasant, as if the same deed had been committed by one of his courtiers. The ill conduct of a thoughtless *boy*, is deemed less criminal than of one who has arrived at maturer years; and the *infant* is deemed exempt from moral culpability. Again,

The axiom, that every offence against an infinite Being demands an infinite punishment, is founded upon a principle which destroys the argument: for every act, and every disposition which respects an infinite Being, must possess a similar character. Thus, whatever pleases God must be infinitely delightful to him. Should any act of obedience possess merit of any kind, it must become infinitely meritorious, and deserve an infinite reward!

Again, by what right does this supposed justice of God towards himself, not only gain the precedency, but triumph over every other attribute? It seems that almighty power cannot resist its baneful effects; infinite wisdom itself cannot devise any means of escape; and the free unconditional operation of mercy becomes completely annihilated!

Once more. Let us examine what it is which constitutes the grand offence of disobedience? It is not resistance to superior Power. Power, abstractedly considered, is merely *physical;* and it may be resisted without moral turpitude, although the attempt might be the excess of temerity. To oppose superior Wisdom indicates folly and indiscretion, which may prove very injurious to the opposer; but unless the adviser of good counsel possess a right to command, the rejection of it, although it be folly, does not induce a *crime.* To offend

against *Benignity* and incessant manifestations of *Goodness*, is folly, indiscretion, injustice, and ingratitude, united. This constitutes the criminality of the *heart*. But what is the characteristic of goodness? Is it not a disposition to promote happiness? In its purest exercises, is it influenced by the expectancy of a recompence? Is not goodness enhanced by its attentions to the undeserving? Are not acts of mercy, which consist in the pardon of offences, and rendering those happy who have deserved punishment, the most exalted and triumphant displays of benevolence; calling forth the warmest effusions of love, gratitude, and admiration? But can the vices of men extinguish this transcendent attribute? Can any offence committed against the person of an *infinitely* benignant Being, become too atrocious for infinite benignity to pardon? Is Benignity to be crampt and mutilated in such a manner, that its operations shall become feeble and limited? Shall this be driven into a contracted space, and leave the usurping principle of personal justice to diffuse eternal misery over the vast creation of God!!!

NOTE O.

After, "mark of rashness enstamped upon it." Page 411.

We have, in a preceding note, made some observations on the early sources of corruption, when christian communities were first established. It is natural to expect that the streams would become more and more polluted, in proportion as they were conveyed, by time, to a greater distance from their fountain; and the voluminous pages of church history, are no other than an extended narra-

tive of accumulating corruptions, with their horrid effects on the peace, morals, and happiness, of mankind. Among the various causes of deviations from the plain and simple truths of primitive christians, which have been developed, sufficient notice has not been taken, perhaps, of the peculiar, and the extensive influence of the principles introduced by *barbarian converts*. Their ignorant and uncultivated minds brought with them a certain set of maxims, which had never been disputed among themselves; which appeared to receive support from the occasional phraseology of scripture; were soon engrafted upon the christian code; and thus were they confounded with genuine christianity.

In all despotic governments, for example, the *Will of the sovereign gave the law*. His commands were absolute, peremptory, irresistible. The ignorant multitude were trained up in servile obedience, without suspecting the equity of his mandates; and reflecting minds were obliged to submit in silence. It was presumed that whatever he did was right; not from its conformity to the principles of rectitude and benevolence, in which his subjects were interested, but because absolute power constituted absolute right. This power, and this species of right, such christians transferred to the Deity also, and confounding their own dogmata, rational or irrational, with the doctrines of revelation, they enjoined it upon the human understanding implicitly to receive them.

Their irresistible Sovereigns being at perfect liberty to chuse their own favourites, without being responsible to any one; and to confer exalted honours upon whomsoever they pleased, caprice frequently made the selec-

tion more than judgment; and, consequently, the most undeserving frequently obtained the preference. Has not this a striking resemblance to that theological doctrine of election, which considers personal worth rather as a disqualification than a recommmendation to the divine favour?

The minds of barbarians and savages are naturally implacable. They resent to perpetuity. They transmit revenge to their posterity as an inheritance. Nor do they consider any punishment too excruciating, or too protracted, for those who have been inimical to them. Such characters were certainly prepared to catch at every obscure passage in the gospel, and interpret it, according to their favourite maxims, into hereditary guilt, eternal revenge, and inextinguishable punishment.

Among such minds, few have been the instances where the free liberation of prisoners, or the pardon of political offenders, has been spontaneous or gratuitous. The universal custom was to demand some ransom, or some species of compensation; an entire, or a partial indemnification, for a supposed injury. They considered a free unpurchased liberation or pardon, as a species of injustice to *Self*, to their clan or party; as an imprudent act of lenity, which would invite insults, or be considered as a mark of timidity, in order to conciliate favour. Have not these principles given rise to those conceptions respecting the atonement of Christ, against which we have stated our objections in a former note?

Sentiments which may thus be fairly traced to so unworthy an origin, and against which the reason of most men, in these modern times, is disposed to revolt, should

surely be admitted with the utmost caution. We must also suggest a consideration to the moderns, which is not the most flattering. These pagan converts did not conceive that they were violating any one principle of reason, by intermixing such sentiments with the christianity they had adopted. They thought them perfectly rational, because they were in conformity to undisputed principles. Incapable as they were to reason properly, they thought that they were obeying the dictates of reason in their mode of interpreting the scriptures, by principles universally received. Here they had doubtless the advantage.

It is not to be supposed that these principles, and many other innovations, would always be implicitly received by those who began to exercise their rational faculties. But they were universally disseminated, and tenaciously supported; and when they received the sanction of civil authority, they assumed the tone of infallibility; anathemas were fulminated against the tenets which the decrees of councils and synods had pronounced to be heresy; and by uniting the terrors of the secular arm with the terrors of heaven, an unbounded empire over the human mind was obtained. A residue of this terror is still exerting its influence, upon the minds of those who apprehend, that it is possible to incur the anger of God by embracing principles most consonant with his moral excellencies, and renouncing such as the unbiassed judgment cannot authorize!

NOTE P.

After "by one hasty act of faith." Page 420.

These peculiarly dangerous principles are built upon

a more slender foundation, than almost any other error which has been received into Christianity. They owe their origin to a single expression, uttered by our Saviour to the penitent malefactor on the cross. What assurances have we that the case of that man is parallel to those cases to which this event is so frequently made applicable? We know nothing of the habitual character or conduct of this man. His crime may have consisted in resistance to tyranny, for which he would have suffered as a malefactor by the Roman law, equally with the most atrocious criminals. He was, probably, the man accused of sedition. We know not that he was instantaneously converted on the cross. It is very manifest that the fame of Jesus might have reached his ears, while he was in prison and under condemnation; which is a situation that would render the promise of pardon, and the expectation of future life most acceptable. The Evangelist Luke gives us the following information, "One of the malefactors, which were hanged, railed on him, saying, if thou be the Christ save thyself and us; but the other answering, rebuked him, saying, dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation; and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds? But this man hath done nothing amiss." From this concise account, it is obvious that both the malefactors had heard that Jesus had announced himself, as the promised Messiah; that the one considered him as an impostor, and challenged him to prove the contrary; that the other considered him as perfectly innocent and unjustly condemned. These are sentiments he could not have entertained without an inward persuasion, previously

entertained, that he was the Messiah; and this would be confirmed by the exemplary patience, piety, and benevolence, which shone so conspicuously in the midst of his sufferings. What analogy is there between such a character and a reprobate person educated in the bosom of Christianity, who had neglected all its precepts, slighted all its invitations and threatenings, until the hour of panic was arrived?

Again, we know not what conceptions this man had formed of the Kingdom of Christ, when he desired to be remembered in it; nor do we know what is comprehended, in the answer, "this day thou shall be with me in Paradise." What is meant by the term Paradise? Those who have made the deepest researches into its signification, are most convinced that it is not the state destined for the enjoyments of the blessed. Nor is it in the least probable that Jesus should have entered into that state, to return after so short an interval; it is equally improbable that so important a circumstance should have been concealed from his disciples after his resurrection, and during the whole of his abode with them.

But of this we are certain, that no uninspired Being is so well acquainted with the human heart, as the Saviour of man; without which no man has authority to imitate his language. He, and he alone, was able to distinguish between true penitence, and the sudden horrors of a panic-struck mind; which, upon escaping from death, has too frequently evinced to the world that its vicious propensities were only obtunded, and not eradicated by the horrors of its situation.

We pretend not to assert that sincere repentance will

not, at any time, be of efficacy; but we deny that ignorant man is a proper judge respecting this penitence, or concerning the nature and extent of the efficacy produced by it; and we maintain, that the decisive tone which is too frequently assumed upon such occasions, is of no essential service to the dying, while it inspires the healthy sinner with the most dangerous presumption.

NOTE Q.

After " writhing agonies of his enemies." Page 421.

That the above censure may not appear too severe, or not founded upon facts, we shall, in justification of our assertions, present to the Reader the following passages, and leave him to decide whether a belief of the eternity of hell torments have not a powerful tendency to harden the heart. They are extracted from the works of that celebrated metaphysician and polemical divine, the *President Edwards*, originally published in *America*, about the year 1750, and *republished in London so recently as in* 1811, in 8 vols. 8vo.

The article from which the following extracts are made, is a " vindication of the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, in the eternal misery of the wicked."

" The saints in heaven will behold the torments of the damned. The smoke of their torments ascendeth up for ever and ever! They shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the lamb. So shall they be tormented in the presence of the glorified saints!

" Hereby will saints be rendered more sensible how great their salvation is; when they see how great the

misery is from which God has saved them, and how great a difference he has made between their state, and the state of others, who were by nature, and perhaps for a time by practice, more sinful and hell-deserving than any. It will give them a greater sense of the wonderfulness of God's grace towards them! Every time they look upon the damned, it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God in making them to differ!" Again,

"The sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints for ever. It will not only make them more sensible of the greatness and freeness of the grace of God in their happiness, but *it will really make their happiness the greater*, as it will make them more sensible of their own happiness. *It will give them a more lively relish for it; it will make them prize it the more*, when they see others who were of the same nature, and born under the same circumstances, plunged into such misery, and they so distinguished! *Oh! it will make them sensible how happy they are!!!* A sense of the opposite misery, in all cases, greatly increases the relish of any joy or pleasure!!!" Again,

"The sight of the wonderful power, the great and dreadful majesty, and aweful justice and holiness of God, manifested in the eternal misery of ungodly men, will make them prize his favour and love vastly the more; *and they will be so much the more happy in the enjoyment of it!*"

NOTE R.

After, "to render them explicit." Page 473.

It must be admitted, that those theologians who en-

tertain different sentiments from the reputedly orthodox, respecting the atonement, the nature of future punishments, &c. have not, in the general tenor of their writings or preaching, been so tenacious of scriptural language as their opponents. In some instances they evidently avoid scriptural expressions, lest they should appear to entertain the sentiments which they reject. But this has the appearance of yielding the field to the adversary, and of setting reason and scripture at variance; which is very injurious to the disseminating of their principles among illiterate Christians. While we are inundated by one class of instructors with scriptural phraseology, which seems to be cautiously avoided by the other, we cannot be surprized that the populous should steadfastly adhere to those, whose habitual language seems to evince, that they, and they *alone*, are preaching the Gospel. It is to be lamented, that the important doctrine of Man's redemption from the wrath of God, and the just punishment of his violated laws, is seldom treated, by those who are termed rational Christians, in any other than in an *argumentative* manner; and their arguments are solely employed to confute the popular notions concerning it. When the Apostles mention the death of Christ, which is their favourite topic, or describe the blessings flowing from it, in varied phraseology; when they represent him as a propitiation for sin, as a ransom, as the redeemer, the sanctifier; when they assert, that he has washed us from our sins in his own blood, that he who knew no sin, was made sin for us, &c. it is invariably to call forth the best affections of the heart, that we may "love him who first loved us, and

gave himself for us;" it is to animate and encourage us "to walk worthy of the holy vocation wherewith we were called." The total omission, or superficial attention to such motives, induces a languor into their compositions which is not compensated by the most accurate chain of reasoning, or by a superior elegance of language.

Nor can it be expected that *their* sentiments, however just in themselves, who invariably adopt the language of ethics, in the place of the infinitely more energetic language of theology, should make a due impression upon illiterate Christians. When the terms *virtue* and *vice*, which the Scriptures know not, are incessantly substituted for *holiness, righteousness, purity of* heart, &c. which the Scriptures do know; or for *sin, ungodliness, wickedness*, which present themselves in every page, is it surprising that such preachers should be considered, by the multitude, as lecturers in Ethics, rather than as preachers of the Gospel? The multitude naturally conclude, that the Divines who retain most of its language, must also retain most of the truths of Scripture; and they as naturally give to such divines the preference. Nor is there any plea, either of necessity or of propriety for this deviation. We have proved, in another place, that by the universal consent of Mankind, in every age and every nation, whatever respects Religion has its appropriate language; in order to elevate it above sublunary concerns, and impress the mind with a sense of its superior importance.*

Again. The just horrors excited by the doctrine of

* See Ethic. Treat. p. ii. Disq. ii. Sect. iv.

everlasting Misery, impel those who disbelieve in the doctrine, entirely to wave the subject, or seldom to expatiate upon the dangers of a wicked course, and the just punishments which await the impenitent. They speak of future punishments with a delicacy which excites no alarm; and not believing that the terrors of the Lord, are such as our popular Creeds represent, they omit such expostulations with sinners as might prove efficacious. Rude minds must be alarmed. They who are deaf to every ingenuous motive, may still be awakened to consideration by the apprehensions of danger.

These are the means to which the mild Jesus, and all his Apostles, had recourse occasionally, in terrific, although indefinite language; and they well deserve imitation.

We shall leave it to our readers to decide, whether the sentiments we have advanced, and attempted to establish in the above Disquisition, do not afford a salutary medium; whether they do not fully authorize all those glowing and influential expressions which the Apostles incessantly employ, without exciting ideas in which reason cannot acquiesce, or which shock humanity.

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ERRATA.

Pages 76 l. 6, *r.* there was
186 l. 18, *r.* in the first part of this disquisition.
192 l. 14, *r.* They have an object; precepts or rules for the attainment of that object; and the sanctions, &c.
344 last line, for congruities, *r.* incongruities.
380 l. 2 from bottom, for their, *r.* the
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